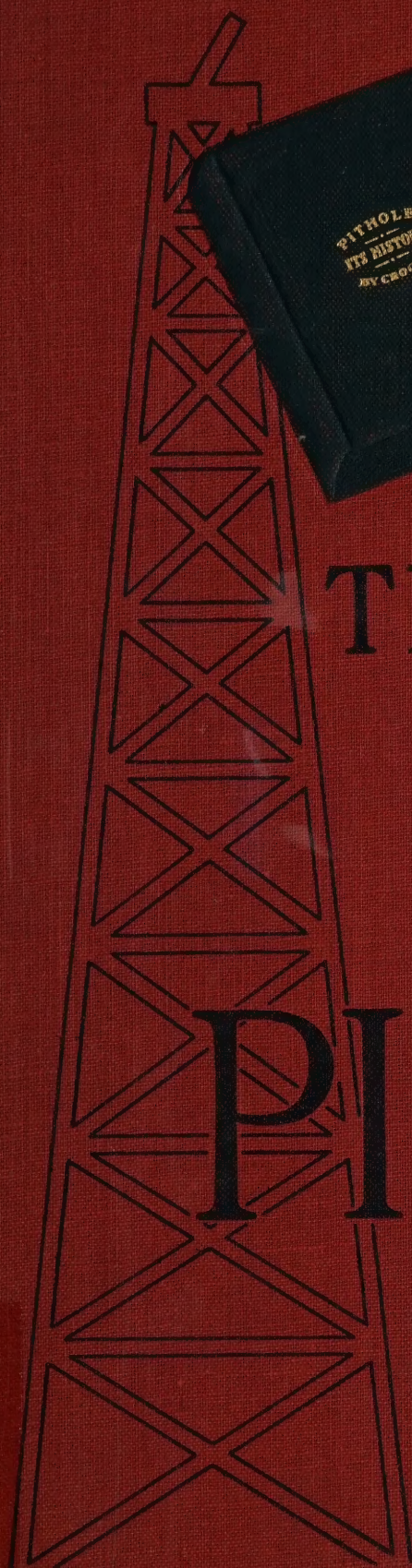


THE  
HISTORY  
OF  
PITHOLE







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# THE HISTORY OF PITHOLE

A REPRINT OF THE ORIGINAL  
HISTORY BY "CROCUS" PRINTED  
IN 1867 BY MORTON, LONGWELL  
AND COMPANY, PITHOLE CITY, PA.

INCLUDING

PREFACE AND APPENDIX

BY

ERNEST C. MILLER

BALTIMORE, MD.

DECEMBER 1945



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*Presented by the*  
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# PREFACE TO THE PRESENT EDITION

In the history of petroleum, Pithole City stands as the most famous of all oil "boom-towns." Once only a group of poor farms in Venango County of northwestern Pennsylvania, the finding of oil thereon early in 1865 caused the creation of a city practically overnight. Later, as production from many of the wells declined, and "gushers" ceased to be common, Pithole withered like a leaf and blew away. Fire aided materially in the destruction and total disappearance of the town. With less oil to work with, the oil men journeyed on to the newly discovered fields of wealth and left Pithole to time and the elements.

While in the growing stage, Pithole excited the popular imagination. It came into being at exactly the right time. A crazy wave of speculation in oil stocks and petroleum ventures of every type was beginning to build toward a climax. The end of the Civil War, the advent of better transportation into the oil regions, and the desire of the people to profitably invest their war revenues all helped create the perfect background for this wooden city of "derricks and debris."

Posterity has available no word-picture of oil madness to match that presented in "The History of Pithole," a small volume written in 1867 by Charles C. Leonard under the pseudonym of "Crocus." Leonard's book was both written and printed at Pithole. As a reporter for "The Pithole Daily Record," the first daily newspaper in Venango County, he had access to much valuable information. Because of his ability as a humorist he was especially welcomed in the community and made many friends who were able to supply him with accurate facts.

Morton, Longwell & Company, publishers of the newspaper, financed the book but contrary to expectations, residents of the section had slight interest in reading history and sales were few. The book was available at the Post Office News Room in Pithole but created no furore and apparently was mentioned only by the astute "Titusville Morning Herald" in a brief review carried in the issue of March 28, 1867. Actually, the book was published too late to have drawn much comment from Pithole; by 1867 the town was tottering along on its last legs. When Pithole finally declined, publisher Lee Morton followed the oil activity to Petroleum Centre where he published "The Petroleum Centre Record." In the December 9, 1871 issue, he wrote that recently he had received a request for a copy of Leonard's volume and that his firm had lost \$500 on the issuing of the book.

Today, seventy-eight years after publication, the thin treatise is perhaps the rarest book dealing with oil history and is eagerly sought by oil historians,



dealers in Americana, libraries, and private collectors alike. Herbert Asbury, an able writer on unusual periods in sectional American history, recently said of the work, "It is now quoted by dealers in Americana at from fifty to two hundred dollars a copy."\* The writer has purchased three copies of the book during the last nine years but diligent search was necessary.

In his excellent bibliography, "The Beginnings of the Petroleum Industry," Dr. Paul H. Giddens has this to say of the book, "This is a serio-comic work, facts, fancies, and figures in alternate equal parts." But no one will deny the importance of the material Leonard packed into his composition. Of the 106 pages, the first 56 are in serious vein with a large percentage of the balance comical and at times bordering on the ridiculous.

In the libraries of the old towns of the oil region, where you would expect to find copies of this book, it is amazing to discover that not a single public library owns a copy. The Carnegie Public Library at Oil City has a copy loaned it by a patron but it does not belong to the library. It is considered valuable enough to be kept in the vault and can be used under supervision. The Drake Well Museum, just a mile outside of Titusville, Pennsylvania, and the repository for many rare articles relative to the early history of petroleum, does have a copy.

Charles C. Leonard was born in Ohio in 1843 and joined the Union Army when only sixteen. He was wounded at the battle of Chickamauga and after being discharged, he went to Pithole during 1865. At first he worked as a clerk in Eddy's Hardware Store and wrote for the newspaper as a side-line. In the fall of 1867 he moved into Titusville where he was bookkeeper, then oil reporter, and finally local reporter on the "Morning Herald." Five years later he was employed briefly by the Cleveland, Ohio "Leader" and next in St. Louis by the "Globe." The lure of petroleum was too strong so back to Titusville came Leonard this time working for "The Evening Press." His stay was short and in January, 1873, he went back to St. Louis but finally settled at Strongsville, Ohio, near Cleveland. His death on March 10, 1874, came early because of his war wounds.

More than one interested person has declared "Crocus" had all the necessary ability to become one of the nation's best humorists had he lived longer.

"The History of Pithole" is reprinted for the first time to make it readily available to all who are interested in the early history of oil in Pennsylvania.

Ernest C. Miller,  
Warren, Pennsylvania,  
October 31, 1945.

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\* Asbury, Herbert—The Golden Flood. Alfred A. Knopf Inc. New York. 1942. Quoted by permission.



THE  
HISTORY  
OF  
PITHOLE

BY  
"CROCUS,"  
(Chas. C. Leonard.)

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"She sits like a patient upon a monument and smiles at *grease*. Nor lets congealment like a worm or bug prey upon her damaged cheek."

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— o —  
PITHOLE CITY, PA.  
MORTON, LONGWELL & CO., PRINTERS.  
1867.







## P R E F A C E.

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THIS little book is just what it professes to be—a collection of facts, fancies and figures, connected with the history of Pithole, and interspersed with such ideas, foolish vargaries and nonsense as have at times come to mind.

No town or city in the world has ever had so remarkable a history as that of Pithole. Its rapid growth, the amount of capital expended, and the fortunes realized here,—its numerous and monster wells, have had no equal since the world began.

This work is necessarily incomplete, and it would require months of constant labor by the most gifted writer, to give a correct and complete history of the place. Had the book been “worked up”—as have the writer’s feelings and boot soles, while searching for statistics—it might present more attractiveness and considerable less truth.

For the benefit of those who think our young town has proved to be “dry territory,” we would say that this great oily heart still continues to pulsate, and to send through its numerous arteries a stream that illuminates the homes of millions. Take a glance at our “flats” any night: the glare of a hundred gas lights, the sound of escaping steam, the countless walking-beams in motion, the bellowing of ungreaed “bull” wheels, combined with a variety of other sights and sounds, ought to convince the most obstinate that the glory of Pithole “has *not* departed,” and the only “mourners who go about the streets” are the few strangers who are visiting the graves of their departed—fortunes, buried in 1865.

To the many who have so kindly assisted the author in his historical researches among the “derricks,” he returns his sincere thanks, and regrets that a want of space prevents his thanking each one in person; and to the people of Pithole City in particular, and the residents of “America” in general, presents this collection of “crude” ideas, hoping they will not be as “dry” as some of the wells of which they treat, and also worth “refining,” if valueless as they now stand.

CROCUS.







## INTRODUCTORY.

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Two years ago the traveler passing through the township of Cornplanter would have found it a barren and almost uninhabited district. The few backwoodsmen it sustained depending more upon their rifles and the products of the forest for a living, than their farms. Money existed as a general thing only in the imagination; greenbacks were unknown, and less than ten years since we feel safe in saying that not \$100,000 was in circulation in the country contiguous to Oil Creek. The settlers who then inhabited this region little dreamed of the vast treasure lying beneath their farms, but in their peaceful homes cared not for the outside world, its cares or pleasures, and the idea of thriving and populous cities springing up on their farms never entered their minds. But upon the discovery of oil by the United States Petroleum Company, on the Thomas Holmden farm, an immense business sprang up as if by magic along the entire Pithole valley. The necessity of a business centre soon became apparent. The Thomas Holmden farm, upon which was the famous U. S. well, being the point of production, naturally became the center of trade. Thither thousands daily rushed, bearing with them capital from every State. It was not an uncommon thing, at this time, for a million dollars to change hands in a single day. Fortune seekers from all parts of America and Europe were attracted to this quarter. The gold of California and Australia no longer tempted them with its glitter, and the "days of oil" usurped the days of "shoddy." On every train they came rushing to the "land of derricks." From the railway terminus they scattered on rickety horses or rickety coaches over rickety roads in search of some spot where the "grease" should shower upon them "untold millions."

Buildings were erected so rapidly as to extort expressions of surprise from every lip. Of course solidity and elegance were sacrificed to rapidity

of construction—but a people who displayed such “goaheadativeness” in the beginning of an enterprise, might safely be trusted with its completion, and the Pithole City of to-day is not the offspring of speculative excitement, but the result of real Anglo Saxon energy.

The valley of Pithole Creek had attracted the attention of oil hunters for a number of years. Six or seven years since some “Bostonians” tried to develop the upper part of the valley about ten miles from the mouth of the creek, and not long after the residents of the valley followed the example. One party set about digging for oil with *shovels*. Others commenced sinking a well with *horse power*, and still another went to drilling with *water power*. All of these attempts were on the McKinney farm, where the hole in the neighborhood of the Homestead well, and the odd looking derrick near the burying ground, are still to be seen. The Boston parties struck heavy water veins, which they could not master, and turned their attention to the, at that time, more promising oil fields on Oil Creek.

The history of Pithole commences properly with the first operations of the United States Petroleum Company. We next give the following sketch of the first developments made by that organization.



# History of Pithole.

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## THE UNITED STATES PETROLEUM COMPANY,

Was organized in the spring of 1864 by Frederick W. Jones, J. Nelson Tappan, (of New York city), James Faulkner, and I. N. Frazier, then connected with the Humboldt Refining Company, of Plumer. I. N. Frazier afterwards became Superintendent, and was considered one of the best oil operators in the country. From the date of this Company's organization commenced the growth and prosperity of Pithole, although it was not until the succeeding year that the city was built. Leases were at once purchased upon the Thomas and Walter Holmden farms, also upon the Blackmer, Luther Woods, McKinney, Haworth, Van Wyck, Tyrrell and Heckert farms, and wells were immediately started on each.

Too much credit cannot be rendered to the U. S. Petroleum Company for the energetic manner in which they proceeded to develop the apparently valueless lands upon the creek. Two or three wells had been sunk by other parties to the *third* sand, as in other localities, and when no oil was there found, it was deemed useless to go further. The officers of the U. S. Petroleum Company, however, from careful and shrewd observations, felt certain that there was a *fourth* sand, and that oil would there be found. Subsequent developments confirmed this belief. Had less energetic parties been engaged in testing and had the "Frazier" well proved a dry hole, Pithole City would never have been heard of, and the life and bustle of commercial activity since witnessed, would never have been seen in this vicinity.

The first well struck on Pithole Creek was the Frazier well, on lease No. 4, Thomas Holmden farm, which at this time was covered with a dense forest, with the exception of that portion of the farm where the city now stands, which was pasture land or meadow. That part of the farm along the creek that has since proved the most valuable, was then considered the poorest territory; and the Blackmer farm, from its location and basin-like appearance, was regarded by all interested as the most promising locality and *the* spot where oil would be found, if anywhere. But oil in paying quantities has never been produced on this farm.

The Frazier well was located by Thomas H. Brown, with the aid of the mysterious twig of witch-hazel. A son of Thomas Holmden and William Lyons were the parties who put down the well, which commenced flowing about the 8th day of January, 1865, at the rate of 250 barrels per day. The production of the well gradually fell off, but upon drawing the rods again flowed at the rate of 900 barrels per day. The finding of oil here was a matter of much surprise, and great excitement followed, which was shared by the owner of the farm when he found he had a fortune almost within his grasp.

Plumer was then the general rendezvous or headquarters of "oilists," who would ride over each morning and back at night. The forest which covered the flats was filled with innumerable swarms of insects and gnats which mercilessly preyed upon the unlucky individual who failed to cover his face and hands with handkerchief and gloves.

Mr. George D. Davis, Jr., sold oil at this well in January, 1865, for \$8 per barrel. This is the largest price ever paid for oil on the creek. In comparison to the weather of later and muddier days, there was then sleighing for six consecutive weeks, and oil was hauled to Titusville on sleighs. The office of the U. S. Pet. Co. was originally at Plumer, but afterwards removed to this place. In all cases where leases were sold, the lessee was required to test the territory immediately or forfeit the lease. There were only three buildings in this vicinity at the time the Frazier well was struck: the Widow Lyons' house, a log structure



now standing at the upper end of Holmden street, near the old machine shop of Leard & Wright; a plain and unpretentious frame building which stood about the centre of Holmden street, near the U. S. Hotel, until destroyed by fire last winter, and which was known as the Thomas Holmden House; and a building at the foot of Main street, occupied at that time by Walter Holmden.

At the time of writing, the following are the officers of the United States Petroleum Company:

Trustees:

J. Nelson Tappan,	Jno. Burchill,
S. Q. Brown,	Chas. K. Randall,
A. A. Sumner,	G. W. Smith,

President:

J. Nelson Tappan.

Vice-President:

Jno. Burchill.

Treasurer:

A. Somarindyck.

Secretary:

P. G. Fenning.

Cashier:

Robt. Leckey.

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As the headquarters of the Oil King, and the first base of operations upon the Creek, no portion of territory has so just a claim as that which is known as the

### THOMAS HOLMDEN FARM.

This celebrated farm is probably one of the most interesting of any in the oil region, and volumes might be written in regard to its history and its wells. It surpasses all other districts in the amount of its oil

production, and the amount of wealth it has poured into the pockets of the fortunate individuals who invested in it. The famous wells Frazier, Pool, the Twins, Grant and "47" were but the larger jewels that crowned its fair exterior.

No story of the Arabian Night's Entertainment ever exceeded in marvelousness the statement that "a few acres of barren and rocky soil, high up among the rugged steeps of the Alleghenies, did at one time shower upon the country upwards of *two million dollars* in gold or its equivalent annually." Hundreds of wells have been sunk upon the flats or bottom lands of this farm, and of the number nearly one hundred produced oil.

In October, 1865, the daily production of oil was nearly five thousand barrels per day. The production for fourteen days in this month was 31,000 barrels. The following are the numbers of the flowing wells upon this territory: Nos. 1 and 2 (Twin wells), 4 (Frazier), 19 (Grant), 35, 37, 47, 54 (Pool), 62, 63, 69, 77 and 148 (Eureka).

The Frazier well has long since ceased to produce oil, and is now an object of interest only as a landmark of the old excitable times of "oil on the brain."

The Pool, Grant, Twins and 148 are still producing, but in quantities hardly sufficient to pay the expense of pumping.

At the present time there are thirty producing wells upon the Thomas Holmden farm, and the following companies are operating: United States Petroleum Company, Illinois Petroleum Company, Chicago Petroleum Company, Chicago & Allegheny Oil & Mining Company, Garden City Petroleum & Mining Company, Empire Oil & Mining Company, and Marine Oil Company.

The land interests of this farm are represented by Messrs. E. G. Patterson and James McNair, gentlemen who have been identified with Pithole and its interests from the beginning of its history.

In 1865, when men from all parts of "America" were visiting Pithole Creek, the Thomas Holmden farm was the centre of attraction. Its wells were the largest and it became the scene of operations. The city



of Pithole is built almost entirely upon it, and in 1865 real estate leases, interests and rents were "clear up" as regards price, and in some cases, location.

We are safe in saying that more money was expended upon this farm and more oil pumped out of it within the same time than on four times the amount of territory elsewhere.

The present owners of the Thomas Holmden farm, and of the fee of the land upon which Pithole City is located, are the Chicago & Allegheny Oil & Mining Company, Garden City Petroleum & Mining Company, Messrs. H. H. Honore and Samuel J. Walker.

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### THE PITHOLE CREEK PETROLEUM COMPANY,

Was also one of the pioneer companies operating in this section. This company was organized by George B. Satterlee, John G. Williams, H. Tracy Arnold, Dr. Wright, Samuel Engle (of New York city), and Emanuel Weiss. The latter named gentleman obtained the leases for the Company upon the different farms at the low figure of \$1 per lease. Operations were commenced about the same time as those of the United States Petroleum Company.

The lands of the Pithole Creek Petroleum Company are upon that portion of the J. Blank farm bordering both sides of Pithole Creek; the C. M. Ball farm near Dawson Center and also near the Island well; that part of the Copeland farm (afterwards the Morey farm) known as the Copeland Reserve; also a lease upon the bottom lands of the Rooker farm. The title of the last named lease was disputed, but a compromise was effected whereby the Company retained twenty-five half acre leases on the most desirable part of the farm.

The whole number of wells sunk by this company was forty-seven, of which twelve produced oil and eight were flowing wells. Among the most valuable wells belonging to this company were the celebrated Rice, Clara, Satterlee, Holmes & Rockwell, Ellsworth, City of London and

Andy Johnson wells. All of these are located on the "Copeland Reserve." The operations of this Company were commenced early in 1865, and it has always possessed a reputation for energy, enterprise and integrity excelled by none.

The present officers are:

President:

Geo. B. Satterlee.

Vice-President:

Geo. Rice.

Secretary and Treasurer:

C. P. Bostwick.

Superintendent:

D. E. Gregory.

Office of the Company at No. 70 Broadway, New York. Office of Superintendent on the Copeland farm.

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### WALTER HOLMDEN FARM.

Many suppose from its bearing the name of "Holmden," that this farm is classed among the best oil producing farms of Pithole. This is an error, although from its location and general appearance it was once thought to be good territory, that idea has long since been abandoned. Little Pithole Creek runs through the centre of this farm, and along this stream several wells were put down by hopeful parties in 1865, but they were never productive, and a very few scattering derricks are left to mark the spot of buried fortunes and hopes.

A portion of this farm, adjoining the Thomas Holmden, was laid out into city lots, which with two or three exceptions were never occupied for building purposes. Should Pithole territory continue to increase in value as it has of late, this property may by spring rank among the best. It is rumored that experienced parties are to give it a thorough testing early in the coming spring of 1867.



## THE ROOKER FARM.

This farm, owing to an existing dispute regarding its title, the details of which we have not space to mention, was not developed as early as the Thomas Holmden and adjoining farms on Pithole Creek.

The Rooker farm was purchased June 4th, 1865, by Mr. Jas. W. Bonta of Jas. A. Bates, for \$280,000, and immediately surveyed, and with the exception of a reserve on the lower end of the farm and that portion on the side of the creek devoted to building lots, was all divided into leases or lots of one half acre each, which were devoted exclusively to oil purposes. When it became known that this territory was free for oil operations, the Superintendent, Mr. Bonta, was besieged by many who had with eager eyes watched the moment when the existing dispute should be satisfactorily settled. Leases were in great demand, and in less than two months from the date of purchase more than ninety leases had been sold at an average bonus of \$3,500. while some were sold as high as \$7,000. The fact that a portion of the farm joined the property of the U. S. Petroleum Company on the Thomas Holmden farm—then so productive of oil—increased its value, and made this at once a centre of excitement and speculation. Wall street was outdone, even in its palmiest days of Harlem and Five-Twenties, by this piece of land in the wilds of Pennsylvania.

Well No. 18, put down by Andrews & Hart, was the first well sunk on the farm, and began flowing just twenty-seven days from the time drilling commenced. Then followed the striking of other wells in the order given, Nos. 110, 109, 108, 15, 16, "V" or Elwood well, 17, 17 No. 2, and No. 19.

In the summer of 1865, three acres of this farm were sold, including the following wells: Nos. 110, 109, 108, 16, 15, "V" and 188. This was then known as the Sumner & Pratt tract, (now as the Whipple & Runals tract), and was sold for the sum of \$75,000; Mr. Bonta having received bonus on leases 108, 109, and 110 amounting to \$7,500, making an aggregate of \$82,500 for the three acres, and none of the wells started at

the time of sale. Like other farms on Pithole Creek, the Rooker farm has an interesting history, which would make a volume of itself, but is necessarily omitted in this work. The average depth of wells on this farm is 710 feet.

Since writing the above, and while the History was in press, well No. 200, Rooker farm, owned by Messrs. Hart & Leyden, commenced testing, and in less than two hours after commencing to pump, oil began flowing at the rate of 75 barrels per day.

Nearly every well upon the bluff proves a good investment to its owners, and each new strike awakens new confidence in those operating upon it.

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### WHIPPLE & RUNALS TRACT.

This portion of the Rooker farm consists of three acres of part bluff and part bottom lands, and is considered the choicest of Pithole territory. This was originally known as the Sumner & Pratt tract, and was purchased early in the summer of 1865 from the owners of the Rooker farm. About the first of October, 1866, Messrs. Whipple & Runals enlarged the tract by purchase to eight acres, and on the 2d of December, 1866, these gentlemen organized a Stock Company (under a charter granted by the Legislature of Illinois) which is now known as the Empire Mining & Oil Company.

There are fifteen producing wells on this tract, as follows: Nos. 13, 14, old and new 15, old and new 16, the "V" well, old and new 17, 19, 108, 109, old 110 and new 110, and 188. Of this number eight were originally flowing wells, viz: old 15, old and new 16, old and new 17, 108, 109, and old 110. Twice has this tract suffered severely by fire, but the owners with commendable energy and perseverance immediately rebuilt the burnt district, and it soon lost all traces of the disaster.

## THE HINER FARM.

This portion of Pithole territory is fast acquiring a reputation similar to the Holmden, Morey and other noted oil producing farms. In the early days of Pithole no one ever thought of boring for oil upon this farm, especially the bluff portion of it; but now the attention of operators is directed to this territory and its leases are considered choice stock. Parties from abroad have lately endeavored to obtain leases, but the owners have concluded to develop the farm themselves.

Among the companies operating upon this territory are the Lockwood Oil Company, Amazon Oil Company, and Marine Oil Company.

The latter company was organized December 1st, 1865, and operations were commenced on the 14th of that month.

The first well struck upon the farm was No. 1, on the Marine Oil Company's lease. Five wells have been put down by this company, and every one produced oil. Below we give the number of the company's wells and their production at the time of writing: No. 1, 100 barrels; No. 3, 75 barrels; No. 6, 15 barrels; No. 9, 30 barrels; and No. 10, 80 barrels.

The officers of the company are as follows:

President:

I. C. Van Hook.

Treasurer:

T. M. Horten.

Secretary:

F. Rhineheart.

Superintendent:

J. Wolf.

About ten acres of land in the immediate vicinity of the Madden well upon this farm have lately been purchased by Messrs. Ellsworth, Vernon, Haskell and Bennett,—all operators of experience, and if oil is to be found, they will bring it to the surface.



## THE MOREY FARM.

This piece of land was for a long time after the discovery of oil on Pithole Creek, considered of very little value; in fact, good for nothing, except "buckwheat and speculation." Those who put down wells upon this territory were laughed at for their pains, and when a certain well (afterwards one of the best) was to be tested, it was done in the night and under cover of darkness, so fearful were the owners of derision and a dry hole. But the striking of the Burtis and other wells upon the bluffs put an end to these troubles, and the farm speedily became an object of interest to all operating along the creek.

As an item of interest showing the shrewdness and speculation of the times, we give the following brief account of the purchasing of said farm, which was contracted for by A. G. Morey and D. Burtis, for the sum of \$300,000, but was afterwards purchased for \$100,000. While drawing up the papers necessary to transfer the right and title to the purchasers, A. G. Morey suggested that \$300,000, (the price first contracted for), be inserted as the sum paid for the farm, instead of \$100,000, the price actually paid. The object of this was to increase the apparent value of the land should a stock company be formed. Mr. Copeland, the owner of the farm, found no objection to this, and the documents were thus made out. So far everything was lovely, but when it came to "stamping" the deeds, as Uncle Samuel requires, the owner of the land could hardly see "from where he stood" why he should furnish revenue stamps for a \$300,000 bill of sale when he only received \$100,000; but business was business, and after much exhortation and wire-pulling, the stamps were plastered according to law and to the wishes of the purchasers. Everything now looked lovelier than ever; but a nephew of Marcus Copeland, who had seen more of the financial and speculative world than his ancient Pennsylvania relative, made a visit to his uncle, and after hearing and examining the facts of the case, thought he "perceived the odor of a small rat," or in other words "smelt a mouse," and after consultation with prominent lawyers, a suit was commenced by Marcus

Copeland against Messrs. Morey & Burtis, which resulted in the latter paying \$300,000 for the farm. Moral—expend your “stamps,” and save your money.

Fifteen producing wells have been struck upon this farm, among which are the celebrated Burtis, Rice, Clara, Ellsworth and City of London wells.

Leases were at one time sold for a bonus of \$5,000 and half the oil, and in one case where four wells were going down on less than one-fourth of an acre of ground, three “thirty-seconds” of the land interests were sold at \$7,000 each.

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### THE BLACKMER FARM.

This may properly be classed with the “dry t  rritory” of Pithole. Although several wells were put down by different parties, yet they were soon abandoned as dry holes. But this farm was the scene of a new and curious feature in oil production, namely: that of an abandoned well flowing on its own account. The *Daily Record*, of February 26th, 1866, says: “It was discovered on Saturday last that a well put down on lease ‘C,’ Blackmer farm, and which had been drilled some 800 feet deep and then abandoned without tubing or testing, was flowing oil over the top of the driving pipe. It has drawn large crowds of curious spectators to witness the novelty, and the excitement in regard to it is intense.” A gentleman who was one of the first to discover the phenomenon gives the following account: In the fall of 1865 a well was put down to the depth of 800 feet on lease C, Blackmer farm, at the junction of Little (or West) Pithole with Pithole Creek, but the parties holding the working interest it is presumed became discouraged, and discontinued operations without having tubed or tested it. A few days since a man at work for the Reno Railroad Company, while passing the derrick, discovered the oil running over the top of the driving pipe. Sometimes when the gas is

not so strong, the oil recedes or settles down several feet below the top of the pipe, where it can be dipped off by the gallon. This circumstance demonstrates clearly that in many cases wells have been pronounced dry holes and abandoned, which could have been made producing wells by proper effort and prudent management.

The Blackmer farm is owned by Wed. W. Clark & Co., of New York city, and the absence of these parties prevents giving a more detailed account of its history.

The United States Petroleum Company have leases upon this farm, and have put down one or two wells, but found no oil.

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### THE J. BLANK FARM,

Consists of 200 acres of territory bordering on Pithole Creek, above the McKinney and adjacent farms.

As regards the production of oil this truly deserves the title of *blank* farm, for although eight or ten wells have been sunk on the same by the Pithole Creek Petroleum Company, or lessees, no oil has ever been produced.

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### THE S. BLANK FARM,

Is also located on Pithole Creek and contains about 100 acres. It is bound on the north by the J. Blank and on the south by the Dawson farm.

This farm has never produced oil, and as far as we can learn has never been thoroughly tested.

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### THE REYNOLDS FARM,

Is located on Pithole Creek adjoining the Hiner farm. It is owned by the Garden City Petroleum & Mining Company, which with the lessees



are now engaged in developing the upper end of the farm. It was purchased in 1865 by the Garden City Petroleum Company and comprises sixty-five acres of bluff territory. No oil has yet been produced on this farm.

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### THE C. COPELAND FARM,

This farm lies on Pithole Creek below the Rooker and Blackmer farms. It contains nearly one hundred and twenty-five acres. The American Illuminating Oil Company is the only organization that ever operated upon this territory. Several wells were sunk but struck nothing except the great "water belt" which is supposed to underlie the territory in this vicinity.

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### THE HOMESTEAD FARM,

Is that portion of territory operated upon by the Botolph Oil & Mining Company, and was, until its purchase, a part of the Hiner farm. The following is a brief sketch of the Botolph Oil & Mining Company's operations: It was one of the earliest companies operating on the creek, and commenced testing the Homestead farm in the winter of 1865. The organization was originally known as the Boston Oil Well Company, but afterwards changed to the name it now bears. James M. Stone, of Charlestown, Mass., is President, John A. Higginson, of Boston, Treasurer, and G. A. Hinckley, Superintendent. Among the flowing wells belonging to this company are the Homestead wells Nos. 1 and 2, Arletta and Stevenson wells. Several other pumping wells have been struck from time to time, but the above list comprises the most noted and valuable wells of the company.

### THE LUTHER WOODS FARM,

Comprises about seventy-five acres of territory below the Blackmer farm. Pithole Creek divides this from the C. Copeland farm. The Woods farm is divided into the upper and lower farms, and extends down the creek for a distance of two miles. Every alternate lease on this farm belongs to the United States Petroleum Company, who put down several wells, but without finding oil.

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### THE McKINNEY FARM,

Is situated on Pithole Creek above the Thomas Holmden farm, and adjoining the Morey farm. It contains about seventy acres, fifty of which are leased by the United States Petroleum Company, who have done much to develop this territory.

The balance of the farm is being operated upon by the Second National Petroleum Company, who own the fee of the entire farm.

Over fifty wells have been sunk by the United States Petroleum Company, or lessees, but only two or three of that number proved of value.

The Second National Petroleum Company also have several good wells upon this farm, among which are: 101, 68, 31, and 67.

Wells No. 10 and 11 (at one time a flowing well), and the celebrated Island well, belong to the United States Petroleum Company. The latter was struck July 20th, 1865, and flowed until December following. This well produced 25,000 barrels of oil.

The McKinney farm, although apparently only partly located over the "oil belt," has produced considerable oil, and is still considered good territory; but, as of other farms, the present price of oil assists much towards retarding developments.

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### Garden City Petroleum & Mining Company,

Was organized in 1865, and is composed entirely of gentlemen doing business in Chicago. This Company owns territory on upper and lower Cherry Run, the Thomas Holmden farm, and are the proprietors of the Reynolds farm. Operations, however, are confined to the two latter farms.

The officers of the company are:

President:  
Wesley Munger.  
Secretary:  
John C. Hilton.  
Superintendent:  
James McNair.

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### Chicago & Allegheny Oil & Mining Company,

Was organized in 1865, by Chicagoans, and is officered as follows:

President:  
Ira G. Munn.  
Superintendent:  
E. G. Patterson.

This company is operating upon the Thomas Holmden farm, and also upon the Osborne farm, five miles below Franklin, on the Allegheny river.

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### The Chicago Petroleum Company,

Owens working interests on the Thomas Holmden farm. Charles N. Walker, is President, and J. V. Le Moyne, Secretary.



### The Bummer Well Company.

Another noted organization, now operating upon the Hiner farm, is known as the "Bummer Well Company." It was organized in October, 1866, by members of the "Forty Thieves," and its officers are also members of that distinguished body.

The only well yet sunk by this company is on lease No. 4, Hiner farm, and is called the Bummer well. Drilling was commenced November 6th, 1866, and January 4th, 1867, oil was pumped from the same. This is a remarkable case of "double-quick time" made by the driller. The well is 765 feet deep.

The officers of the company are:

Secretary and Treasurer:

Wm. H. Bowman.

Superintendent:

L. H. Smith.

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### The St. Louis & Pithole Petroleum Company,

Is operating on the Dawson farm, near Dawson Centre, and has one or two pumping wells at that point.

J. C. Smith is the Superintendent of this company.

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There are hundreds of other organizations and companies that have operated in former times upon Pithole Creek, but which are now either broken up or operating elsewhere, and of whom it is impossible to obtain accurate information. The foregoing list contains sketches of the most prominent and reliable Petroleum Companies now operating on Pithole territory.

## THE FLOWING OIL WELLS OF PITHOLE,

Were the largest, and attracted the most attention in their day, of anything of similar character in the world. Prominent among them were the following:

### The Grant Well.

This was one of the finest of the large wells which at one time made Pithole so famous. It was struck on the 2d day of August, 1865, at a depth of 604 feet.

There was not the slightest show of oil at first, and the parties who sunk the well put down the tubing merely as an experiment, but no sooner had they done so and pumped *four hours*, than it commenced flowing at the rate of 800 barrels per day, but finally decreased to a steady flow of 700 barrels.

This well has twice suffered severely by fire. It caught fire at the time it was struck, and was burned again October 10th, 1865. During the latter fire several thousand barrels of oil belonging to the well were destroyed, also the tanks and fine office belongings of the Company. The well kept flowing during the fire, and it was several days before the flames could be extinguished. An account written at that time says: "A painter's skill could scarce portray the beautiful scene which this well presented while burning. The elevated pipe which had poured the oil over the tops of the tanks had fallen with its support and lay prostrate upon the ground, the oil pouring from it all the while and burning as rapidly as it flowed. Nothing could surpass the beauty of this jet of burning oil. Every imaginable color was presented momentarily to the observer. The oil from this well flows continuous but not steadily, about each successive five seconds it bursts forth, shooting at least thirty feet in a horizontal direction. The fire of course is all that is visible, darting rocket-like from the flame at the mouth of the pipe. The first burst is a ruddy blaze deeper in color than the deep red heat of

the fire of the smith; then as it rises a whirl of mingled smoke and flame is seen, then the volume of black smoke, which again gives place to the secondary ruddy jet." \* \* Several workmen were badly burned at this fire, and one or two afterwards died.

The Grant well ceased flowing on the 3d of June, 1866, having flowed exactly ten months to an hour. It is now pumping 20 barrels per day. James Sheakly, Esq., of Greenville, Pa., is Superintendent.

Thousands of strangers visited this well in 1865, and various descriptions were given of the same in many of the leading journals of the day.

### The Pool Well, or No. 54,

Was the largest well ever struck in this vicinity, and was the pride of our citizens, as it was the admiration of strangers, who were upon their arrival immediately shown this "monster." Many who visited the place not with the intention of investing in territory, no sooner saw this well, heard its breathings, and witnessed the constant stream of oil being thrown into its tanks, than off they went, crazy with excitement and with visions of untold wealth before them, invested in "oil lands" at fabulous prices,—later to learn that it is one thing to *see* a flowing well and quite another to "*strike*" one.

No. 54 was struck on the 28th of August, 1865. For three days it actually flowed 1,300 barrels per day. It ceased to flow in May, 1866.

The depth of this well is 611 feet. The first sand was found at a depth of 95 feet and was 44 feet in thickness; second sand at 360 feet, 22 feet in thickness; third sand at 460 feet, 12 feet in thickness; a mud vein was found under the third sand; and the fourth sand rock at a depth of 595 feet.

### The Burtis Well, No. 184 Morey Farm.

This well was struck January 21st, 1866, and flowed precisely six months, at a rate of 300 barrels per day. Since it ceased to flow it has pumped 50 barrels a day, and has kept up to its standard as well if not



better than any other well upon the creek. The striking of this well created an excitement not surpassed by any of the larger wells upon the flats, for the idea of sinking a well upon bluff territory for oil was ridiculed by all until the Burtis began to spout.

### Homestead Well No. 1.

This noted well is situated on that portion of territory known as the Homestead farm, and was struck about the third of June, 1865. It was pumped several weeks before it flowed. About the 6th of October the "seed bag" burst and the well ceased to flow. Although efforts were made to "recover" it, they were futile, and it was soon forgotten, among the other big strikes daily occurring. The production of this well from the 3d of June to October 6th, 1865, was 28,000 barrels.

### Homestead Well No. 2,

On the same farm, was pumped two weeks and considered by those interested as a very dry hole, until June 1st, 1866, when, upon drawing the sucker-rods, it commenced flowing and flowed steadily until the last of July, 1866, when it ceased,—having produced in the meantime 6,000 barrels of oil.

### The Eureka Well,

On lease 148, Thomas Holmden farm, was another of our most valuable flowing wells. It was struck about the 15th of November, 1865, and produced over 50,000 barrels of oil. A dividend was declared January 1st, 1866, of \$1,603.97 to each sixteenth interest, or a total of \$25,663.52. Dividends were then declared as follows: February, \$16,000, or \$1,000 to the sixteenth; March, \$11,200, or \$700 to the sixteenth; April, \$6,400, or \$400 to the sixteenth; May, \$5,600, or \$350 to the sixteenth. Although small compared with the figures or profits realized from some

larger wells, yet the above statistics will enable the lucky individual who never speculates in oil or let oil speculate in him, to see the real value of a good flowing well.

### The Twin Wells,

Are located on leases Nos. 1 and 2, Thomas Holmden farm, and were at one time most excellent wells. No. 2 commenced flowing June 16th, 1865, and No. 1 on the 19th, or three days afterwards. Depth of No. 1, 605 feet; No. 2, 617 feet.

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But Pithole, renowned as it was for its monster wells, enterprise and the magnitude of its operations, with capitalists from every part of the Union developing its resources, was destined to receive still another attraction in the form of

### FLOWING SURFACE WELLS

Which astonished even the Pitholians, who had long since ceased to wonder at common miracles, but who were surprised at this new freak of nature.

The hillside upon which the city is located suddenly commenced yielding oil. The water springs and shafts sunk to obtain water, become flowing oil wells.

Many operators without the necessary means to purchase a set of drilling tools, or even a shovel, by the aid of a shingle or their hands dug excavations in the soil that produced oil.

At first the story of these surface wells was not believed, and the leading journals of "America" refused to publish accounts of the same, believing it to be a hoax, or story manufactured by our sensationists. But when the truth became known, thousands of strangers visited these

wells, including many of the leading journalists and "savants" of the country; and if possible the excitement was greater than that of earlier and oilier days.

Much speculation was indulged in at this time; building lots commanded high figures, and fabulous prices were offered for the "water wells" and "springs," that had previously been of little value. No one has ever offered a satisfactory explanation of this phenomena, which to this day remains a mystery. The following is taken from the *Pithole Record* of February 5th, 1866:

"As those who were engaged in putting out the fire yesterday were throwing water on, it was discovered by so doing they were only adding fresh fuel to the flames; and on closer examination a quantity of our 'liquid greenbacks' was seen floating on the water. A rush was made to the nearest pump from which water was taken, and there we found a lively 'negro' with his teeth chattering from fright at the flow of gas from the spout. He had pumped the well until all the water had been exhausted, then oil and gas flowed in liberal quantities.

"The pump was then handled very lively, the oil continued to come and the fire speedily lost all interest except to the losers. Many disbelieved the account and could hardly credit their eyesight, thinking the oil was put there for a 'sell,' but before long it was found that two other water wells and some springs had commenced spouting oil, and incredulity gave way to belief.

"The news then spread through the town like wild-fire, and every one left his or her work and went to the spot. We are all accustomed to visit the flats and see oil flow from deep drilled wells, but it was something decidedly novel for the oil to return the compliment and bring its liquid treasures to our back doors from water wells only sixteen feet deep, to say nothing of the springs that were flowing fast.

"The wells so far are three in number, and there are some four or five flowing springs. They are situated on the west side of Holmden street in the rear of John street. The oil is accompanied by some gas although



not so much as the wells on the flats show. It was tested yesterday and the specific gravity is 42 degrees, according to the U. S. Petroleum Co's standard. The water of these wells and springs has been considered of very good quality until last Sunday, when a disagreeable taste was noticed, which has increased ever since. Not the least strange thing is that these new oil wells are all at least 150 feet above the flats. Perhaps the first discoverer of oil in Pithole City was Mr. J. L. Sheive, of the bath house, who discovered several inches of oil on the tank of the spring at six o'clock yesterday morning.

"The first well struck belonged to Mrs. Rickets, a widow who has heretofore earned her living by washing. It is at the depth of sixteen feet, and was only pumped at intervals, yet the oil would come freely upon pumping, and fill a barrel in ten minutes. Mrs. Rickets was offered at first \$1,000, then \$2,000, for the well, until at last a gentleman secured the refusal at \$5,000 until this morning.

"Mr. L. L. Hill's well was the favorite and was pumped very vigorously during the day, much to the amusement of an admiring crowd, who were more used to seeing a steam engine with its walking-beam and other apparatus pumping oil, than witnessing a "one man" power at a pump-handle. It filled a barrel in five minutes during the time it was pumped. This well is 23 feet deep. The owner refused an offer of \$7,000 for it.

"Much amusement was caused by a discovery that the oil had created quite a rivalry among some three or four Irishmen for the hand of the fair widow, who had so suddenly ranked herself among our oil princes.

"Many theories have been broached as to how the oil got there, and the most probable of them seems to be that the artesian well has exhausted large quantities of the water, allowing the oil to run out of the crevices and flow into the wells and springs. A few thought it might be caused by a leak in the Meredith pipes, but that is improbable, as the gravity is different and in that case there would be no gas. We shall be happy to hear from some of our practical oil men on the subject."

\* \* \* \* \*

This excitement continued. The *Record* issued thousands of extras concerning the new discoveries, and they were gobbled up by the crowd as fast as printed. People from all parts of the oil country came flocking in to see these curiosities. The ground seemed to be fairly saturated with oil, and was riddled with holes and shallow excavations from which the oil slowly oozed.

The scene resembled the gold diggings of Australia when the "yellow fever" was at its height. Barrels of oil were dipped from the springs with dippers, and the bottoms of a great many cellars were found covered with the oleaginous fluid.

Scientific men were puzzled as to the cause of this outpouring of nature's wealth, and their perplexity was added to by the flow of salt water and gas with the oil, which according to their experience was a most favorable sign.

Many ludicrous incidents relating to the excitement are narrated, but as the author of this work was carried away by the "fever," it will not be necessary to relate them. Suffice it to say that he was in Ohio at the time of the discoveries, but immediately telegraphed to his partner at this point to secure all the territory under the building in which he was clerking, and commence operations without delay; this was done, and upon the writer's arrival some days later, he found a hole under the store big enough to bury an elephant in; but it proved to be "dry territory," and no pecuniary benefits ever resulted therefrom.

While the wells were thus giving oil instead of water, men and women, boys and girls, could be seen with tin pails, wooden pails, tea-kettles, &c. in their hands vainly searching for pure water. Oil might buy coffee or tea, but would not make it. Nor were the tea-drinkers alone in their grief, for an ancient cow walked up to her accustomed watering place but one taste was enough, for she turned and left the spot, evidently thinking it might effect the price of her butter should she indulge.

An Irishman who had a small spring was highly elated at the turn fortune was taking; for said he: "Yesterday I wasn't worth a cent; and, be jabers, to-day I'm worth me thousands upon thousands."

Oil continued to be found in the heart of the city. The streets and hotels were rapidly filled. Strangers who came, expecting it amounted to nothing, after an examination were convinced that the natural wealth of Pithole had not been developed.

For a month the yield of the wells and springs was immense, but they finally ceased to flow, and all interest in them was lost in the larger strikes daily occurring upon the flats.

The following theory is from the gifted pen of Professor Q. Reuskus, then engaged in dipping oil along the creek. We give the Professor's letter in full:

ON THE FLATS, January, 1867.

MR. CROCUS, DEAR SIR:—You ask my opinion in regard to the flowing surface wells of Pithole, that caused such an excitement a year ago. I claim that owing to the large amount of gas constantly arising from political circles throughout the land, the entire air is impregnated with benzine, which when it rises to the ground below, becomes idealized or confused and percolates through the entire soil, into the solid cavities of the suburban rock.

From thence it meanders to the surface and is lost in oblivion or discovered by man and woman. To my mind it is very seldom where the source of this oil may be found. But, nevertheless, quite evident to the initiated. I analyzed specimens of this surface oil in 1866 and found it to be of moderate gravity, and the best oil for convivial purposes yet discovered.

Should the above be of any benefit to the public you are at liberty to publish this.

Q. REUSKUS,  
Professor.

With this valuable document we close the history of the Surface Wells. The wells are also closed at the time of writing.



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INCIDENTS.

The following is an extract from an article written in 1865. Some may consider the account exaggerated, or "high toned," but we assure the gentle reader that like other stories with a smaller moral, this is "founded on fact." A pen and mind gifted with all the imagination of a divine novelist could not optray or do justice to the scenes of speculation and excitement of that time:

"All day, the several roads leading to this 'oily center' are traversed by pedestrians and horsemen (buggies are unknown here) whose faces point in but one direction—toward Pithole. In coming to this place the first object that attracts the attention of the stranger is the immense number of teams engaged in transporting oil to the nearest points on the railroad. These 'oil trains' very much resemble the wagon trains of a moving army, often forming a continuous line for miles. Here is seen the same old 'Army Mule' that toiled through 'days of war. It is doubtful whether *he* believes in the benefits resulting from a blessed peace. And we are sure that his sensitive nature is touched when he thinks of the days when 'government oats' were plentiful, and he was the *proud* mule that drew 'hard tack and lobsouse' for 'Sherman's boys in blue,' instead of a degraded 'oil mule.' You can distinguish the ex-army mule at a glance, by his abject appearance and down-cast eye. *Now* he never indulges in a 'kick up' or joyful whisks of tail, but with slow step performs his greasy work, and often dies the victim of a broken heart.

"Another feature of teaming, and one that reminds you of 'marching days,' is the prevalence of profanity among the teamsters. Seated on his mule—driving with one line—clothed in tattered regulation hat, faded blouse and worn cavalry pants, you are almost willing to swear that he has tended mules for Uncle Sam in 'sunnier and rebellious' climes; but when his wagon gets stuck, as is frequently the case, in some bottomless pit of mud, then your doubts are all removed as to his previous

occupation; for after trying a 'gee pull' and fetching them 'haw' without success, off goes our M. D. into the mud and amid kicks and blows indulges oaths and curses, accompanied by screeches and yells, which were never originated elsewhere than on a 'southern swamp road' and by a 'demoralized Yankee soldier.' During the early part of the day the moving throng of teams tends towards Pithole and in the afternoon in the direction of 'Titusville' or 'Miller Farm.'

"As you near the city you are surprised at the countless numbers of derricks going up and already erected along the creek. At first sight it seems that every available spot of ground is occupied by these lofty and skeleton-like structures, so near together that it appears impossible for a wagon to drive between them, while the walking-beams in motion seem in danger of colliding. But a nearer view shows that there is room enough and to spare; at least so think the owners of the land, who will sell you a lease, if it is only large enough to sink your driving-pipe upon; your derrick must be put up on your neighbor's territory.

The manner of sinking a well may be of interest to those who never visited the oil country, or witnessed the method of procuring oil. And as many came to the place with the idea that all the tools necessary with which to strike oil were a pick and shovel, and that the 'grease' might be had by digging into the ground a few inches, the following description may afford some light upon the subject:

### Putting Down a Well.

First comes the derrick,—a lighthouse-looking structure, some forty-eight feet in height; then an engine of ten or twelve horse power, and a temporary shed to cover it and to shelter the operators and afford them sleeping quarters, as it is not safe to leave the premises or machinery even for a night: if they did, they might return in the morning to find that every movable thing had departed. Even the derrick and engine have been stolen in a single night; and not long since an enterprising thief stole the tubing out of the *bottom* of a well as fast as the owner let

it down from the top; in this manner he purloined nearly a thousand feet of tubing from a six hundred foot well; but the owner suspecting something, set to work, and the thief was brought up in the *sand pump*. This is not a 'fish' nor an 'oil' story, therefore the writer is not a 'sardine.' But to return to the well and our subject.

"There is to be as many feet of cable or rope as will reach to the intended depth. A rope socket connects the sinker-bar, of two inch round iron; below this comes the 'jars,' two pieces of iron five feet in length, working like two long links within each other, and designed, by the jar they cause in lifting, to more readily loosen the drill should it become fastened. Below this comes the augur-stem, a round bar of two or two and a-half inch iron fifteen or twenty feet in length which is attached to the center-bit, a blunt chisel-shaped instrument. The 'tools' when put together measure about forty feet in length, and weigh some 800 pounds, and when they fall a foot or two are calculated to make their mark. After drilling a few inches the tools are drawn, and the sand pump is brought into requisition. This is a tube about eight feet in length, made of sheet-iron or zinc, and with a valve in the bottom. This sinks of its gravity in the water or sediment at the bottom of the well, and when it starts upwards the valve closes. It is drawn up by steam—all the work of boring, testing and pumping is done by steam. The pump is then emptied of its contents until the hole is cleaned. Then the 'reamer' takes the place of the centre-bit or drill, and is used to remove all inequalities in the sides of the well and give it a round and even form. These 'tools,' including engine, house, derrick, &c., are called a 'rig.' When all are in place and in working order, the first step towards boring is to put down the drive-pipe. This is generally a heavy cast-iron pipe six inches in diameter (although occasionally a smaller pipe is used); it is in sections eight feet in length and is secured at the joints by wrought-iron bands put on while heated. This pipe is driven down by a heavy descending weight, after the manner of 'pile driving.' It is put down to the first rock, or at least to where the earth is solid, and there is no danger of caving, say about twenty feet. It is

important that it should go down straight, as it is to be the guide for the drill.

"'Casing' is now being universally adopted. It consists in putting down a three or three and a-half inch wrought-iron pipe, and inside of this placing the tubing, which is a two inch wrought-iron pipe; both of these go together by a thread and screw. Casing is said to have many advantages, not only to the well using it, but to neighboring wells: It prevents 'flooding,' that is waters rushing in and forcing the oil out; greatly facilitates the drawing of tubing for repairs; prevents injury to the seed-bag, &c."

Here operators count by "sands:" first, second, third and fourth sands. The third sand has water and some oil, but not in paying quantities. The fourth sand is the oil strata. The water which finds its way into the well from the third sand must of course be ejected, or it will eject the *oil*. This is accomplished by the "seed-bag." The height of the third sand from the bottom is ascertained, and around that portion of the pipe which will rest just below this sand, is wrapped a leather bag filled with flax seed. When dry, it is smaller than the hole and goes down readily; but when it becomes saturated with water, the seed swells and hermetically seals the aperture, and excludes the water from the lower part of the well.

### Testing a Well.

When things have got to this stage all that remains to do is to "test" the well. This is done by pumping night and day until the water is exhausted. Sometimes this is accomplished in a few hours, and sometimes it lasts for days. If the valves finally bring up oil you are a "rich man," and can board at a first-class hotel, wear white kids when at work on the flats, and move in the best society of Pithole, besides holding office in the "Swordsman's Club." If your well is *dry*, the six or seven thousand dollars you have expended, is—to say nothing of the "bonus" money—gone up.



The manner of putting down a dry hole is very similar to the foregoing description. Both branches are taught by an old teacher called Experience, in a manner much more complete than can be done by any common writer. At one time it was thought no oil could be found except on the flats, but the recent strikes on the Hiner farm and adjacent bluffs have exploded that theory. Leases on this territory are now considered choice stock.

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## THE CITY,

Like Rome, sits on seven hills and from its throne of beauty rules the world. This quotation and comparison is not correct, but mistakes will happen in war times.

As you enter the deeper stratas of liquid mud, which distinguish the main streets of the town, a sight is presented which is not witnessed elsewhere on any discovered portion of the globe and the like will never be seen again.

It is a wooden town, not a brick or stone house in it. The streets are narrow, with but a single plank for a sidewalk, and in many instances the plank is so far beneath the surface that more than ordinary length of limb is required to reach it. The buildings on either side are of every size and shape imaginable, from a four story hotel to the diminutive stand of a ginger-bread or pea-nut merchant.

The smell of new lumber, fresh paint and the "crude," is everywhere discernible. Here may be seen a building which is neither sided, floored nor finished, but the roof is up,—from the peak of which swings a sign, informing the public that "Oil Leases" will there be bought and sold (if the building gets finished and the owner gets time).

The fronts of the buildings present a fine appearance, while many of the Hotels and stores have a neat and substantial look not usually seen

outside of "America's" more favored towns. But the mud in our streets! Words cannot describe or poles fathom it. Empty wagons are frequently stuck fast in the center of our main streets, and a day or two since a lady accidentally stepped off from a crossing and became so hopelessly engulfed that it was only after the persevering and united efforts of three men that she was extricated from the mud and her dilemma.

But the "powers of mud" are only realized when a fire threatens to destroy the town. Then it is that our "native element" proves a blessing, for by its aid the flames are quickly smothered.

### A Mud Machine.

In September, 1865, a genius and graduate from the "Berea Cheese Manufactory" of Berea, Ohio, came to this city, and soon after invented a "mud engine," for putting out fires. No patent was ever applied for, and the owner, like the inventor of the guillotine, perished by his instrument. While carelessly oiling some part of its complicated machinery, during a fire, he fell into the receiver, and was thrown into the burning building.

This machine resembled the "dredge" used to deepen river channels and harbors, excepting it was mounted on wheels.

When the alarm of fire was given, it was run into the nearest hole and steam let on. A huge trowel or dipper descended into the mud and came up laden with a ton or two of the precious substance; by another motion of the lever, the whole mass was thrown upon the blazing buildings.

One or two evolutions was generally sufficient to smother any flame.

This "Engine" was capable of throwing sixty shovels or dippers full per minute, and would have proved invaluable in case of an insurrection or mob.

## PIPE COMPANIES.

Among the many enterprises originated for the purpose of transporting oil to places of shipment on the river or railroad were the following:

### Pennsylvania Tubing Transportation Company.

From the first discovery of oil in this section, many inconveniences arose in regard to transporting the oil to places of shipment. Teams were plenty, but the process of hauling oil to Titusville or the Allegheny was necessarily slow and costly.

The idea of transporting oil by a pipe to Oleopolis, on the Allegheny river, originated with Thomas C. Bates, of Syracuse. A company was then formed, with a capital of \$100,000; Joseph Casy as President, and Thomas C. Bates as Vice-President. Col. Brackett and S. M. Spencer completed the arrangements, and David Kirk was first appointed Superintendent.

The laying of the pipe was commenced in November, 1865, and oil was first shipped on the 10th of December following. The business for the fall closed January 23d, 1866, the company having shipped during the meantime 20,000 barrels of oil.

The pipe is six inches in diameter, has a capacity for 7,000 barrels, and extends from Pithole to Oleopolis—a distance of seven miles. In this distance the pipe has a fall of 360 feet. From its continuous down grade it constantly drains itself. It follows Pithole Creek nearly to the river, and during this distance it crosses the creek twenty-one times.

Unlike the Miller Farm and other pipe lines, here no forcing power is required, and the oil is by its own gravity carried from the company's tanks at Pithole right through to Oleopolis, and even to Pittsburgh, without being touched by the hand of man.

The Pennsylvania Tubing Transportation Company has erected an iron tank at Oleopolis, capable of containing 16,000 barrels of oil.

In the spring of 1865 there was organized the Rochester & Oleopolis Petroleum Company, with a capital of \$100,000, for the purpose of buying oil at Pithole, shipping to Oleopolis and there selling. During the summer this company shipped 120,000 barrels of oil.

As many suppose this company to be connected with the Pennsylvania Tubing Transportation Company, perhaps it would be well to state that it is a distinct and separate organization.

### Miller Farm & Pithole Pipe.

The work of laying this pipe commenced in August, 1865, and was completed about the first of October the same year.

At first but one line of pipe was laid, but business increasing a second line was put down.

M. E. Van Sycle, of Jersey City, Henry C. Oplen, of New York, Charles Hickox and Charles W. Noble, of Cleveland, Ohio, composed the original company. M. E. Van Sycle afterwards became the sole owner of the pipe.

The length of the pipe is five and one-quarter miles; diameter two inches. Four pumps were originally used in pumping oil, but only one is now in operation. The Surveyor of this line was J. P. Culver, of Titusville.

The pipe is now the property of the First National Bank of Titusville, and M. E. Bassett is the agent at Pithole.

### The Titusville Pipe Company,

Was organized by H. E. Pickett and G. J. Sherman, of Titusville.

The work of laying the pipe was commenced in January, 1866, and completed by the first of April. Two lines of two inch wrought-iron pipe extend from Pithole to Titusville, a distance of nine and one-quarter miles.



Five engines or stean pumps of twelve-horse power are used to force the oil through these pipes, which connect with the tanks of thirty-seven different wells at this place.

The cost of the pipe was \$120,000.

The office of the company at Pithole is on lease No. 50, McKinney farm. Charles P. Hatch is Superintendent, and E. O. Adams, General Agent.

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## THE PLANK ROADS.

The greatest difficulty during the summer and fall of 1865 was a want of good roads or other facilities for transporting the oil from Pithole to the nearest point upon the railroads or river. The frequency of rains is well known to all who have sojourned in this section of country during the summer season, where pleasant weather is an exception, instead of the rule, as in other localities. But the state of the roads after a shower is not so well known: suffice it to say, that they were at times impassable for teams; at other times not more than two barrels could be "hauled" at one load.

With two thousand teams at work upon the creek oil continued to accumulate, and tank after tank was erected to store the same. This holding large amounts of oil in tanks was a dangerous policy on account of fires, but it became a necessity. The operators did not like to see the oil run down the creek to waste, nor did they like to sell it for a sum hardly sufficient to cover the "Infernal Revenue Tax;" consequently increased facilities for transportation became a matter of much importance to all connected with the oil business in this vicinity.

### The Titusville Plank Road.

The most feasible and easily built structure was a plank road, eleven miles in length, to Titusville. A company was organized, and soon

after a double line of four inch plank was commenced being laid.

Owing to the unprecedented bad weather, this road was not completed until the winter of 1866. The United States Petroleum Company—desirous of having the control of the road, partly in the hands of the oil producers—invested largely in it.

We are unable to give the names of the officers belonging to the Titusville and Pithole Plank Road Company at the time of writing.

### Miller Farm Plank Road.

Another plank road was built under the supervision of Wm. H. Webb, the eminent ship-builder, of New York, from Pithole to Miller Farm, on the Oil Creek Railroad. This is known as the Miller Farm and Pithole Plank Road, and is six and a half miles in length.

These roads have proved an incalculable benefit to Pithole and the surrounding country, but have never paid the cost of construction.

In the summer season there is not a more delightful drive in Western Pennsylvania than one over either of the previously named roads. The ever varied scenery of forest and field renders it peculiarly attractive, and on every possible occasion the road is filled with the "gay turnouts" of Titusvillians on a visit to Pithole, or vice versa.

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### OIL CITY & PITHOLE BRANCH RAILROAD.

This is decidedly one of the best enterprises with which our city has been blessed since its birth. Our citizens had long felt the want of proper communication with the outer world.

The process of getting freight from Miller Farm and Titusville was necessarily slow, and disastrous to the merchant doing business here. Oil could be pumped through pipes; but dry goods, vegetables and notions could not, and it was with feelings of joy that we heard the

welcome news of the completion of the road. Extras were issued by the press bearing the glad tidings: "Pithole in America at last," and the event was the occasion of much rejoicing. The prospects of the town looked encouraging. Oil operators could now step from the derrick to their home circle in a few hours' time, and without being subjected to the torments and miseries of a ride over bottomless roads. Pittsburgh, Cleveland and Buffalo Dailies were received the day of publication, and the mails came to time hours earlier than usual.

The Oil City & Pithole Branch Railroad was built on a charter of the Clarion Land & Improvement Company, an act authorizing the company to build branch roads in either of the counties of Venango, Clarion, Mercer or Elk, the branch not to exceed twenty miles.

Work on the Pithole Branch was commenced about September 1st, 1865. The first train of cars came through from Oleopolis to Pithole December 18th, 1865, and the first train from Oil City to Pithole March 10th, 1866. The length of the road is sixteen miles, and the cost of construction \$800,000.

Ten miles of this road, from Oleopolis to Oil City, was taken possession of by the Warren & Franklin Railway Company August 1st, 1866, through a decision of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, given in June, 1866.

This road was constructed by Samuel J. Fox, and follows Pithole Creek nearly the whole distance from Pithole to Oleopolis. From the latter place to Oil City it follows the Allegheny river.

In the summer season the scenery and picturesque views which are seen in passing over the latter portion of the road cannot be surpassed for native beauty by any portion of this continent.

The officers of the Road are as follows: Directors—Wm. Thorp, Wm. Reynolds, J. J. Shryock, T. B. Porteous, J. J. Vandergrift.

President—Wm. Thorp.

Vice-President—T. B. Porteous.

Superintendent—J. Shirk.

Secretary & Treasurer—J. T. Blair.

## THE RENO, OIL CREEK & PITHOLE RAILROAD.

We are sorry to inform the readers of this "History" that this railroad was never finished.

The road is graded and the ties laid through to this place, but as yet the ears of our citizens have never been regaled with the melodious shriek of the iron horse, as he comes in on this line. We will not give the reason for the non-completion of this enterprise. Perhaps it was due to the failure of Culver, Penn & Co., while some think it owing to the failure of Pithole.

For a while work was prosecuted with much energy upon this route, but it suddenly ceased and has never been resumed, although we are frequently promised that the cars will soon run between Reno and Pithole.

Some magnificent tressels are built on this route, and if the reports in circulation are true it should have been an excellent thing.

We were informed by a laborer who was engaged in cutting ties for the company that when the road was completed persons traveling on this line would be sure to arrive in Heaven or Pithole soon after they took seats. Each train was to be provided with surgeons, undertakers, amputating tables and other luxuries. The company furnished coffins, to all who desired them, free of charge. Hospitals were to be established along the entire route, and in cases of fatal accident the bodies of strangers should be immediately embalmed. It was thought the arrangements would be so perfect and accidents so sure on this road that many would have their limbs taken off and get embalmed, before starting, to avoid delay while on the cars.

\* \* \* \* \*

We cannot say that we believe the story of the "tie cutter," but as soon as the railroad is completed shall test the comforts and conveniences of this model route.



## THE CHURCHES.

As may be expected, during its youthful days, the city was not noted for its religious proclivities; but on the contrary, vice and crime, for a time, held full sway.

The first divine service held in Pithole was in the Metropolitan Stables on Brown street, by Rev. D. S. Steadman, who until the completion of his church, also preached in the bar room of the Chase House, Murphy's Theatre and other localities. These meetings were all well attended by respectful and orderly congregations.

### The Methodist Episcopal Church.

Labor was commenced on the Methodist Episcopal Church the 29th day of August, 1865, and through the untiring energy of Rev. D. S. Steadman, (its present pastor), the work progressed rapidly, and on the 1st of January, 1866, services were held in the new church, which was not really finished until the following spring.

On the 27th day of May, 1866, this church was dedicated by Bishop Simpson, assisted by Dr. Loomis, President of Allegheny College, and Rev. G. W. Maltby, Presiding Elder of the Jamestown District. Fifteen hundred dollars was contributed on the day of the dedication by the citizens of Pithole, and the church thus relieved from debt.

We cannot drop this subject without paying a just and deserving tribute to the citizens who have responded promptly to all calls for pecuniary assistance towards erecting a place of worship. All have given freely, whether rich or poor, church-member or otherwise; and the church edifice that adorns the hillside and gladdens the eye of the traveler as he approaches our borough, is one of which older communities might well be proud.

Many interesting incidents occurred to those engaged in soliciting subscriptions for the church, one or two of which we will relate:

As the subscription agent was one day about to enter the door of a

noted den of ill-fame, not a hundred miles from First street, his attention was arrested by a card fastened over the door which had been placed there by some enterprising tract distributor, and which bore the sentence: "ARE YOU PREPARED TO DIE?" The agent entered, and addressing the landlord or proprietor, said "I am glad to see that you warn all who enter your doors, and are honest enough to bid them prepare for death before entering, by placing that notice over your door." The individual thus addressed failed to see the point until he saw the placard, when some tall swearing ensued, followed by an invitation to drink; this, of course, was refused, but a subscription to the church solicited, which was cheerfully given.

On another occasion, when "knock downs," shooting affrays and robberies were of nightly occurrence, and it was unsafe for persons to walk the street unarmed, a certain individual, then and since most closely identified with the church, while passing along a back street at the "dead hour of night," perceived two suspicious-looking characters approaching him from opposite directions, and apparently with no good intent. His pace slackened, so did that of the other party. With a large sum of money about his person belonging to the church, it is needless to say he was alarmed, but mustering courage as the ruffians drew closer, he suddenly drew from his pocket a most formidable looking weapon in the shape of a *meerschaum pipe case*, and in accents wild threatened to blow the brains out of the first man who approached. The rogues fell back in alarm, at sight of the supposed derringer, and the gentleman was suffered to pass unmolested. It is no uncommon occurrence for a pipe to fill its owner's eyes with smoke, but this is the only instance on record where a "pipe case" effectually blinded another party.

### United Presbyterian Church.

This church was commenced building at the same time of the former, but for want of funds it was never completed.

### The Catholic Church.

This fine structure, under the supervision of Rev. John L. Finucane, was erected in the summer of 1865, and services held therein during the fall, and also the winter of 1866.

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### THE HOTELS OF PITHOLE,

Have always possessed a reputation for elegance and style excelled by none in the oil region.

Among the best are the following:

#### The Chase House

Is a fine four story building situated on Holmden street, and has always been one of the finest and best regulated hotels of our city, and has a reputation throughout the oil country excelled by none.

This hotel was built in the summer of 1865, at a cost of \$100,000, by H. Patchen and S. H. Allen. It was opened on the 11th of September, 1865, and known as the Patchen House, until purchased by George K. Chase, of New York City.

From its central location and the convenience of its arrangements, this House has ever been the resort of oil operators, whose families were sojourning here, and is a universal favorite.

Col. S. H. Allen is the present proprietor of this House.

#### The Bonta House

Was erected in the fall of 1865, by its present proprietor, James W. Bonta, at a cost of \$60,000.

The architectural design, the manner in which it is furnished and its fine location—being situated on one of the high and healthy eminences

which surround the town—render it one of the very best Hotels in the oil region. This Hotel was opened to the public January 1st, 1866, and although doing an immense business at one time, it has never proved a success, in a pecuniary point of view, to its owner.

### The Danforth House,

Corner of Holmden and First streets, is another of the large and elegant Hotels which grace the town. It being conveniently located near the oil territory of Pithole—its magnificent arrangements for the accomodation of guests, together with excellent management—make it decidedly popular with those doing business here; and there is no better kept hotel in the city. It was erected in the fall of 1865, by A. D. Danforth, at a cost of \$40,000, and was opened on Christmas day, 1865. H. W. Mabb is the present manager.

### The St. Nicholas Hotel,

Situated on Holmden street, although more unpretending in size than its stylish kindred, has been kept up in a manner worthy of emulation, and it is an excellent hotel in every respect. Messrs. Wilson & Schofield are the present proprietors.

### The Morey Farm Hotel.

This was another of the grand and imposing edifices which marked the days of "oil on the brain," and for which Pithole is so justly celebrated. It was erected in the summer of 1865, at a cost of \$70,000, and was furnished regardless of expense.

This Hotel was entirely destroyed by fire on the 1st of October, 1866, which was the work of an incendiary, who for some spite against the owners, thus sought revenge.



There were at one time no less than fifty hotels in the place, not including boarding houses and restaurants, and each one was doing a lively business. But the hopes of the landlords vanished with the departing strangers, and the number of public houses rapidly diminished.

The fires which so frequently desolated the place destroyed many of these structures, and they were never rebuilt.

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## THE WATER WORKS.

Among the many enterprises for which our city is justly celebrated none are more worthy of notice than the Pithole City Water Works.

From the birth of the town there was a great scarcity of water for drinking purposes. The elevation of land upon which the city proper is located, together with a strata of rock immediately beneath the surface of the soil, rendered it extremely difficult to sink water wells. There were a few surface springs upon the hillside, but the constant drain upon them made it impossible to supply the city with water from this source.

For many weeks pure water was retailed through the streets for one dollar per barrel, or at ten cents a pail full. We have seen one dollar paid for a pail of common drinking water, and ten cents a drink was no uncommon price at that time. Water wagons constantly traveled the streets, and filled the barrels or buckets at the different houses with water obtained from a flowing water well on the creek. Is it to be wondered at that water as a beverage ceased to be used in Pithole? With whisky as cheap as "nature's fluid," and far more plentiful, it is not strange every man carried a bottle. "John B. Gough" would have found few followers here in "his policy," at that time.

The Pithole City Water Company was organized by Messrs. J. C. Cross and A. P. Hatch, and operations commenced in September, 1865. The well and reservoir is located on the highest point of land on the Walter Holmden farm, and overlooking the city.

At the depth of 213 feet an excellent spring of pure water was found, and by the 18th day of November the city was supplied with water.

The Chase House consumed the first water turned in the pipes.

The diameter of the main pipe is three inches, and it extends through all the principal streets of the borough. Eleven thousand feet of pipe is thus used in conveying water to all parts of the city.

The size of the bore of the well is four inches in diameter, and 15,000 barrels per day have been pumped, although that amount is not needed for the city's use. The reservoir has a capacity of 25,000 barrels. The whole cost of this enterprise was \$25,000.

Many troubles and difficulties arose from mismanagement, and the works were finally sold at Sheriff's sale, in May, 1866. M. M. Moore, of Erie, was the purchaser, and now owns the same.

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## THE POST OFFICE.

From the commencement of operations on Pithole Creek, the want of a proper mail communication with the outside world was felt by all. Oil City, Titusville and Plumer were at that time the nearest points reached by the mail bags.

A post office was opened to the public by Captain S. S. Hill, on the twenty-seventh of July, 1865. The population at that time numbered about ten thousand. The work done by the office at this time was immense. The first mail dispatched contained over 1,000 letters, and the fourth mail over 4,000. When the post office was ten days old, upwards of 10,000 letters per day were handled by the Postmaster and his assistants.

During the December following the opening of the office, it was entered by burglars and the mail bags stolen. Vigilant efforts were at once made to discover the thieves, but without success. A few days after the robbery the empty mail bags were found under the livery stable con-

nected with the Hubbs House. The contents of the bags, or all that remained of them, were afterwards discovered behind a large rock on the highest point of the Walter Holmden farm, and near the reservoir of the Pithole Water Works.

The amount of business transacted proving too large for the then small office, it was removed in the fall to its present location in the Chase House building, and is now a model office as regards convenience. When business was at its height in 1865, it was often found necessary to throw open every window of the office to accommodate the crowd; even then some hasty individuals (on hand just in time to fall in behind a dozen others) would buy out the more lucky person nearest the delivery window, and thus get his mail a few moments sooner. This buying of positions was of frequent occurrence, and quite a "bonus" was often realized by the speculator.

Sunday was the day for everybody to go to the post office, and long before the appointed time for opening, a line of news-seeking individuals would be formed, extending for many rods down the street, each man clinging to his neighbor in front, the line wavering and sometimes half a dozen would go down, amid the laughter of those who quickly took the places of the "fallen ones," who were by this tumble compelled to go to the rear and work up gradually to their old position. Anything and everything that had the least possible touch of the comic about it, would quickly excite the risibilities of the crowd, who would break out into vociferous cheering. To an attentive observer the day seemed any other than the quiet day of rest, known in "God's country" (as any place outside of Pithole was *reverentially* called) as the Sabbath.

Much more of interest might be written in regard to the post office, but we forbear.

A second attempt to rob the office resulted in the capture of the would-be thieves as they were about to enter.

For many months the Pithole post office was the third in size in the State—Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and Pithole was the order of rank.

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## THE PITHOLE DAILY RECORD.

This is one of the few institutions of Pithole that has kept in the "front rank" and never "fell out," no matter how discouraging the prospect or dull the times. Each day since its birth has it made its appearance; and with its collection of items, oil reports and local news afforded entertainment and instruction to all.

The first Record was published September 25th, 1865, by Morton, Spare & Co.

This was the first daily paper published in Venango county.

L. M. Morton, the present editor, came to Pithole in August, 1865. His baggage consisted of a "change of linen," trunk full of job type, pair of top boots and a meerschaum pipe. With this stock he established a job office.

Much difficulty was experienced in getting out the first number of the paper. (See panorama of the oil region, section 14). At first 1,500 copies per day were issued, and twice that number could have been sold if they could have been published.

The firm changed to Morton, Longwell & Co., November 25th, 1865: Captain W. H. Longwell and Mr. C. C. Wicker being admitted. Both are gentlemen of excellent business and social qualifications, and added materially to the standing of the Record.

The first job of printing done in Pithole was for a Pennsylvanian who had thrown some logs across little Pithole Creek, called it a bridge, and charged ten cents to each team that crossed said structure. The tickets were printed at the Record office, and this, the first job of printing, was *never paid for*. This was a lesson which has since been faithfully conned by the printers.

We are informed by the editorial staff, from editor to devil, that the Record is now a fixed fact; that as long as a single hole shows signs of oil, or a derrick is visible, it will continue to make its appearance.

While Oil City, Petroleum Centre, Tidioute, and other older and "so



called" livelier towns have been without a paper, Pithole, from its birth, has supported a *daily* paper, and is likely to do so for years to come.

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### THE W. U. TELEGRAPH COMPANY

Established an office here early in June, 1865. It stood upon that portion of Holmden street, now occupied by Kemp's Block. The only furniture of the office consisted of a local battery, steel pen, and three-legged stool. Mr. V. H. McCord has been identified with the interests of this company since the birth of Pithole, and he still handles the "forked lightning" in connection with T. P. Wheeler, at their office in the Chase House building.

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### THE U. S. TELEGRAPH COMPANY

Came to town about the same time, but closed out the following March, owing to the Western Union Telegraph Company coming into possession of the controlling interest of the line.

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### FIRES.

The city of Pithole has suffered severely from numerous and destructive fires, which were rendered more destroying from the want of water, and an organized company of firemen.

A Hook & Ladder Company for a short time did good service; but from some cause—probably a lack of support by the citizens—the organization "fell through," and has long since ceased to exist.

As we have frequently stated the mud with which we were cursed proved an invaluable blessing towards extinguishing and preventing the spread of conflagrations. We append a list of the most important fires with which the city has been visited.

August 2d, 1865.

Burning of the Grant and other wells, on the Thomas Holmden farm.

October 8th.

Destructive fire on the flats; \$1,500,000 worth of oil and property destroyed. The following list of wells were burned: Nos. 17, 18, 19 (Grant), 21, 22, 23, and 66 Holmden farm, and Nos. 3 and 4 Morey farm.

December 4th,

Rochester House, corner of Second and Prather streets, burned. Loss \$8,000.

February 8th, 1866,

Fire on Holmden street. Tremont House, Syracuse House, and Chautauqua Livery Stable entirely consumed. United States Hotel and Buffalo House greatly injured. Loss \$50,000. It was during this fire that the Surface Wells were discovered.

February 17th,

Fire in Balltown. Several stores, saloons, stables and dwellings destroyed. Loss \$20,000.

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**March 12th,**

Great fire on Brown street, which burned the National Hotel, Wisconsin Livery Stable; No. 18, used as a brothel; No. 22, Linclon House; Nos. 24 and 26, a double house used as a dwelling; No. 29, belonging to Mrs. Ricketts (the oil princess). Several other buildings damaged. Loss \$47,000.

The month of April, 1866, was noted for its many and disastrous conflagrations.

**April 2d,**

Oil Refinery of Battles, Vorce & Co. burned; also two wells upon the Rooker farm.

**April 3d,**

Fire on Holmden street. Utica House, grocery establishment and shoe shop burned. Loss \$5,000.

**April 9th,**

Old Holmden house and bath rooms of J. Shieve destroyed. Loss \$5,000.

**April 10th,**

Tanks of Titusville Pipe Company burned, with large amount of other property, including engines, derricks, &c. Loss \$20,000.

**April 14th,**

Refinery of Van Horn & Co., on lease 110 Thomas Holmden farm, wells 107 and 108 Holmden, and 13 and 14 Rooker farm, destroyed by fire. Loss \$16,000.

**April 30th,**

Great fire on First street. Eighteen buildings burned including the following hotels: Cumberland House, Eckert House, Globe Hotel, Oil City House and Center House. Loss \$30,000.

**May 23d,**

Balltown nearly destroyed by fire. Total loss \$135,000.

**June 12th,**

Another fire on First street. Twenty buildings destroyed. Loss \$30,000.

**June 19th,**

Two story house on Brown street burned.

**August 2d,**

A destructive fire on the Holmden and Rooker farms. Much property, including oil, rigs, offices, &c., belonging to the United States Petroleum Company and Messrs. Whipple & Runals, burned. At this fire, 13,000 barrels of oil and twenty-seven wells, with their entire rigs, were burned. Total loss \$150,000.

**December 27th,**

Another fire occurred on the Thomas Holmden farm, which destroyed much property belonging to the United States Petroleum Company, and also several wells and tanks upon the Empire Oil & Mining Company's tract. Loss of property \$10,000.



Since the last mentioned fire the city and oil territory has been very fortunate, but one or two fires having occurred. This is due to the increased vigilance of the citizens, and the efficiency of the night watchmen employed by residents on the different streets.

### Organization of Pithole City Borough.

In the fall of 1865 it became evident to the large population then resident at this place that a borough government must be organized in order that laws for the protection of life and property might be properly enforced, and Pithole take its place as a recognized sister among the collection of boroughs and cities which the oil excitement had caused to spring into existence. Accordingly application was made to the court, praying for the granting of power to organize a borough under the name of "Pithole City Borough," which application being granted, the 11th day of December, 1865, was designated by the court as the day on which the first officers of the new borough should be elected.

The contest was a spirited one; the chief contestants for the office of Burgess or Mayor, being Henry R. Kemp, James Solley and Alexander J. Keenan. The latter was elected by a small majority over his competitors. Mr. Kemp, however, received a large majority of the popular vote, a "popular" board of election having been organized aside from the regularly appointed board, and polls opened for the purpose of testing the popularity of the candidates with the masses, a large proportion of whom were residents of other States, and consequently not legal voters. The borough government as placed in office at that election was as follows:

Burgess,  
Alexander J. Keenan.  
Councilmen,  
Leonard H. Church,            Frank P. Confer,  
David Gardner,                James T. Chalfant,  
Lee M. Morton.

As there was some talk among defeated candidates of contesting the election, on the ground that a portion of those elected were not eligible to office, not being residents of the State a sufficient length of time, a bill legalizing the election was prepared, taken to Harrisburg, passed through both Houses, signed by the Governor, and returned to the successful candidates, while the opposition were yet working at their contesting maneuvers. This *coup de etat*, which was soon backed by a decision of the court, sustaining it, put a quietus on all efforts for contesting, and the new board quietly took its seat.

At the election on December 11th, 1866, the following gentlemen were elected to govern the borough during its second year of existence:

Burgess,  
George D. Davis, Jr.  
Councilmen,  
Samuel M. Alford,                  Charles B. Wright,  
James H. Ransom,                Alexander F. Abbott,  
Charles H. Duncan.



GENERAL VIEW OF PITHOLE, 1865

• • • Mather photo





MAIN STREET OF PITHOLE

*Mather photo*





BALLTOWN WELLS, AT PITHOLE, 1865

*Mather photo*



BONTA HOUSE, PITHOLE, PA.

**THIS PROPERTY** will be given away on the 6th day of  
June, 1866. Price of tickets to the Concert \$10.00 each.  
Agents wanted in every Village and City.

J. W. BONTA, PITHOLE, PA.

THE BONTA HOUSE, OPENED JANUARY 1, 1866—  
GIVEN AWAY JUNE 6, 1866

*Mather photo*

## Part Second.

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The following sketches comprise that portion of "our city's history" that could not well be told in any other style than that known as "burlesque;" but the reader is assured that they contain much more *fact* than fancy, and all are true scenes from life in Pithole. With this explanation we present part second, which commences with a cut representing the



### Discovery of Pithole, in 1865, by Mr. "Pit."

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The city of Pithole was commenced in August, 1865, and grew like magic, notwithstanding the scarcity of lumber and other building materials. Night and day, in storm or sunshine, nothing could be heard but the sound of hammers or the screeching of saws. While hundreds of

buildings were going up, thousands of strangers were coming in, each resolved to participate in the excitement, if it "took a leg."

The oil fever continued to spread, and in less than six weeks from the time building was commenced, we had a city of our own, with buildings enough to accommodate its population which was then six thousand. Baron Munchausen or Aladdin never conjured up a tale that surpassed this reality.

It might truly be called a city of a day; and it contained Hotels, Churches, Banks, Opera Houses, Theatres, that would grace many older cities of longer growth.

The most noted and wealthy men of the country visited the town and contributed their "mite" towards our "dry holes" and other enterprises.

Pithole City is supposed to be one of the inland seaport towns captured by "Sampson," on his celebrated "march to the sea," where soon after with his army, composed of a sutler and the jaw-bone of an a-rmy mule, he turned the flank of 3,000 Philistines, demoralizing them to such an extent that they were only fit for buzzard hash after the battle. Eminent commentators agree in the supposition that this was the last watering place at which J. Wilkes Booth, Wirz, Herod and Judas stopped previous to their departure from this country, that they might find their final lodgings more comfortable by comparison.

We will now in a leisurely manner treat of the situation both local and focal:

The town, like Rome, is laid out with an eye to comfortable fish markets, and is 3,000 feet between the level of the Erie canal. Longitude is reckoned either north or south from any established "hemorrhoid" at Oil City. No latitude is reckoned since the meridians blew down. An underground railroad is to be put through from Reno as soon as convenient; most of the capital stock is already underground.

About the center of the 19th century, a poor white struck the Grant well (and it has never recovered from the blow) named in honor of



General Grant, who once borrowed a cigar of the owner of said well while on a campaign after Richmond, the slayer of Richard the third, a celebrated horse jockey, who loved riding so well that when dying he called his numerous family around him and offered his kingdom coming for a bob-tailed horse, but no livery stable being near, he gave up his ride and the ghost.

The inhabitants at once began to realize that this was their own, their native land. Village lots were staked off, and dirt was retailed by the shovelful, with a *fee* at this time *very simple*.

A second-hand missionary was forwarded from Oberlin, Ohio; but two days after his arrival he fell from virtue and the top of a derrick, and soon after opened a gin mill and faro bank, and peddled checks in a boot. A mongrel population came rolling in, many of the people speaking a language entirely different from the "Sanglo Axon," and conversing only by signs.

The sight of a bottle seemed to drive them crazy, causing an expectation of a substance similar to cotton, accompanied by wild cries which sounded like "giveusadrinkolefeller."

In thirty days from the date not mentioned, the population (which was mostly floating, when liquor enough could be procured to float in) numbered 5,000 souls all "tolled," including two or three that were not told, and one man on Brown street who "had no soul."

\* \* \* \* \*

But business is in a healthy condition and on the improve. The city now contains 5,000 inhabitants, numerous public buildings, too large churches, the finest hotels in the country, banks and billiard rooms, "free and easys," (where you are free but not very easy), telegraph offices and many other perquisites belonging to civilized nations. The buildings are of the style known as golgothic, *i.e.* all the genius of the architect being laid out on the front or figure head, while the rear,—like a regiment of conscripts,—is closed up any way.

The "land sharks" that once infested the place have left, and it is now pretty fair swimming, if you can swim. A few gudgeons are still caught with bare hooks, but most of them want a little bait before nibbling.

Petroleum has been discovered near Pithole in such quantities that many prefer it to penny dips and other oils for illuminating purposes.

Many of the inhabitants present a prematurely old appearance, owing to the hair being worn off the top of their heads by carrying bottles in their hats after joining the sons of temperance. \* \* \* \*

Since the discovery of oil, land is so valuable here that the city authorities propose to start a grave yard on the Choctaw plan, i.e.: place the coffins on poles. This would give the land agents a chance to speculate beneath.

During the height of the excitement and mud of '65, the remains of a "mastodon" were found in the lower strata of clay and oil on Holmden street. Professor Rootentoot said they were the remains of the animal known as "masticutor," or jonnikaikgrinder, that existed previous to the flood on Oil Creek. Owing to the enormous size of the "jaw" discovered, it was supposed to belong to a female. We give the following illustration:



Remains of Mastodon found on Holmden street, 1866.

The army was represented by many individuals, who, while in Uncle Samuel's employ *drilled* companies and regiments, but who now run another *drill* from that of Scott or Hardee; and with more money and less glory as a reward.

Owing to the want of lumber, buildings could not be erected as rapidly as they were needed, and to furnish shelter for the hundreds of strangers daily arriving, canvass houses were erected. At one time the hill-side was fairly covered with these structures, from the size of a general's or

Sutler's "shebang" down to the diminutive "pup tent" of the high private. A few fortune seekers, too near dead broke to enjoy life in so expensive a dwelling as a tent, built themselves "local habitations" of logs, mud and stones, with barrel or stick chimneys, and almost any day when mule teams were plodding along the under-ground road, as it was termed, a scene was visible which brought forcibly to mind the days of war, and it only needed the presence of "army blue," the sound of the bugle, and the inevitable picket guard, to carry you back to the days of shoddy and shoulder straps.

The hotels were doing a rushing business, especially about meal time, and long before the appointed hour for dinner a steady tide of hungry and open mouths flowed in the direction of the boarding places, from whence through the open windows came the clatter of plate and platter, as well as the savory odor of roast meats and "spoon vittels." Crowding around the entrance to the dining room, each one trying to get nearest the door by pushing his neighbor; small men crying to larger and luckier ones to get off from their corns; reverend and rogue, broadcloth and homespun, were here jammed together, often forming a line of battle which extended into the street, and presented a comical sight—if you were not very hungry and could afford to wait. The sound of the gong was the signal for a universal charge along the entire line, and happy the man who got a seat at the first table without being subjected to more than a hydraulic pressure.

Where so many different characters and nations were represented much lawlessness necessarily prevailed; and although the stories of crime, so industriously circulated, were exaggerated, yet gambling, robbery and shooting were of frequent occurrence.

Before the organization of a police force, a self-appointed vigilance committee dealt justice to rogues in Texas or Californian frontier style.

Gambling was at one time carried on in the streets. We have seen a common dry goods box sold for \$10, and ten minutes later it was doing duty as a faro table on Holmden street.

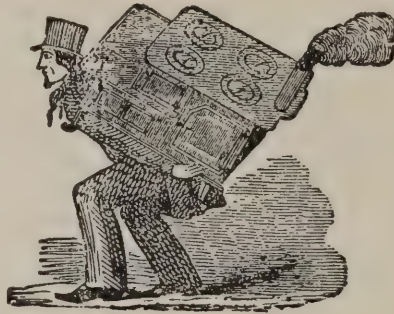
Street fights were a common occurrence. A humorous writer, in a

letter from the "Pit" in 1865, says: "The greater portion of the population of Holmden street were engaged, at the time of our visit, in witnessing a fight between a colored man and one of the Caucasian race. The descendant of Ham proved the better man, and his antagonist made a hasty change of base. Business generally was suspended, and the folks seemed to enjoy the fun amazingly. There had only been thirteen fights that forenoon, and the weather was not considered very favorable for fighting either."

Theatres were established at an early date, and were filled nightly by appreciative audiences. Murphy's Theatre, on First street, was really a first class place of amusement, and many of the leading theatrical stars of the country appeared upon its boards and played to crowded houses.

Concert saloons, casinos or free and easys were plentiful, with all the usual concomitants of "pretty waiter girls," pimps and beer drinkers.

As an illustration of the energy displayed by the business men at this time, we give the following:



Which represents one of our hardware men delivering a hot stove to one of his customers, during a scarcity of drays and express wagons. This is a sketch from life.



Rev. S. J. M. Eaton, in his history of the Oil Regions of Pennsylvania, after speaking of Oil City, says:

"Six miles further up we come to Pithole Creek, now become famous for its new developments, as well as new features in the oil business. This is a rocky precipitous stream, dashing down amid the hills, over loose broken rocks, and has a fall per mile greater than any other stream in the oil valleys.

"It derives its name from a peculiar conformation of the country. The stream seems to gush from an immense pit in the rocks. There are several of these pits in the neighborhood that seem to indicate a structure of rock different from that known in the neighboring valleys.

"An old story is related of a hunter, who in the olden time shot a wild turkey, and wishing to go further and not carry his game with him, suspended it in one of these pits by a string. On his return, later in the day, he found his game tainted and worthless. Others speak of villainous odors arising from these pits. The conclusion is that they lead to broken cavities deep in the rock, and that gasses are escaping from below."

\* \* \* \* \*

Mr. Eaton then gives a partial description of Pithole City, but as he never lost money here it is evident that his heart is not interested in his work, for he is very brief.

In September, 1866, we formed part of a company that visited one of these "pits" "from which comes strong odors of 'onions,' dead cats and brimstone," as per former reports, and subjoin the following different accounts by members of the exploring party, which was composed of gentlemen exclusively.

For the benefit of the reader we wish to say that both accounts are correct:

\* \* \* \* \*

"It is known to most of those who have operated on Pithole Creek, or resided in Pithole borough, that tradition ascribes the naming of the

creek and consequently of the borough, to the existence of a hole of huge dimensions and unfathomable depth, somewhere between the head waters and mouth of the creek. Some versions of the tradition give to the hole or pit wonderful qualities—claiming that it vomits gas, water and fire at various times, and that its capacity and depth are unknown to mortal man.

"Resolving to solve the mystery that so long hung over the name and origin of Pithole, a party of gentlemen concluded to visit this 'hole' which formed so prominent a part of our past history, and to which the 'oldest inhabitant' had not yet paid a pilgrimage,—and ascertain by actual investigation, if the wonderful attributes ascribed to it really existed, or were the wild vagaries of traditional lore handed down from father to son with all the enlargements which time and distance lend or stories of ye olden time. \* \* \* \* \*

"Like the 'King of France with forty (thousand) men we marched up the hill,' where the simile ended for the time being, and the Mecca to which we had turned our faces was before us. The 'hole,' the 'pit,' the 'cavern,' the opening which gave Pithole Creek a name was before us! We had full opportunity of feasting our eyes upon the historical spot which had become sacred as a portion of the veritable ground trod by our forefathers while the red man of the forest yet rung his bloody war-whoop through the wooded aisles and chanted his defying death song at the captive stake. \* \* \* \* \*

"All the investigations when brought under the focus of critical examination reduced themselves to the fact that there was a 'hole' or 'pit' upon the brow of the mountain; at toe foot of which lies Oleopolis. That the 'hole' or 'pit' was explorable to the distance of thirty feet or more without risk. That by great exertion the point at which exploration generally ceased might be passed, and what was beyond nobody knew. Satisfied with arriving at these results the entire party completed the simile mentioned in the beginning of this article and 'marched down the hill again.' "

\* \* \* \* \*

The other writer in his description says: "The day was one of September's best and as the genial rays of the sun came glancing through the trees, the color of the fading leaves was exquisitely blended with the royal scarlet of many noses affording a sight as rare as it was sublime.

"As we toiled up the steep ascent which led to the chasm, many were tempted to fall out by the 'way side,' and would have done so had Long-fellow's Inn been there; but after placing a man with the liver complaint at the head of the column, our progress was more slow and easy.

"As he hoofed it through the brush,  
And through the tangled fern,  
He tote his mustn't mention 'ems,  
And had to put on hern.

"But we were suddenly recalled from our poetical reverie by the voice of our guide who shouted: 'Here it is!' and we found ourselves standing upon the brink of a terrible abyss, some six feet in depth, whose black and yawning mouth and jagged sides caused the stoutest heart to quail and draw back with terror. But we had souls among us that knew not fear; they had stood the 'draft' during the war without shrinking beyond the Canada line, and who would not now draw back when duty and science said 'go in.' We give the report of each individual as he emerged from this dark unfathomed cavity:

"Mr. Brooks testified and said that the cave ran six feet either up or down, he could not tell which—but probably both. Strong smell of gas; no signs of life.

"Mr. Snooks then entered, and on his exit, swore that the cave extended 300 feet perpendicularly, 100 feet slantindicularly, and with small family chambers leading off at parallel angles. Found a cork screw, pop bottle, and other antediluvian relics, supposed to have been placed there by some liquor dealer before the convening of the Franklin court in the present century. Reported strong signs of gas; no smell of life.

"Mr. Crooks said the cave was large, and somewhat small; hung with gorgeous stalactites, with a clear stream of limpid water falling horizon-

tally from the floor of the cavern. No odor of gas; but a strong smell of stomach bitters, probably left by the previous explorer, who was severely censured for trying to drink alone.

"Mr. Stooks reports 'two openings plainly visible; floor, apparently flexible, rose to meet my feet; sides of cavern closed against my face; large demijohn in back end of the cave; rows of bottles suspended from overhead; tried to get trusted for a drink; got lost—couldn't find the bar—and made my way out.' This individual continued to see double long after coming out; but an application of bourbon relieved him.

"Messrs. Flocks & Hooks made a thorough examination: 'find a skeleton, pronounced by the doctor to be that of a female, and of the species known as duplex-elliptic,—now nearly extinct.

"Mr. Rooks brings out a ladie's net, waterfall and 'tilter'—the latter supposed to have been lost during the Saracen war, when 'tilting' and tournaments were numerous. The size of this gentleman's feet prevented his turning in the cave, and he was forced to back out.

"But by perseverance and clearing away the sticks and and stones that obstructed the passage way, Mr. Cooks entered somewhat between 900 feet, when his lamp and courage gave out, and he returned, covered with imperishable honor and mud.

"The company then passed the following resolutions for the benefit of future generations:

"Resolved—That we have explored Pithole, both the town and cave.

"Resolved—That we will never do so again."

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Among the many exhibitions—moral, comic, instructive and startling—which visited Pithole, was a "something" which the proprietor called a

### Gift Concert.

Here is his circular:



A Noble Act. — Benevolence! Notoriety! Humanity and Cupidity!

The undersigned has after a three years' sojourn in Canada, (during the war), succeeded in making the following liberal offers to the public:

A Gift Concert, on wheels, will start from the extreme center of the North pole, and after giving a series of entertainments in the principal cities, towns, villages and hamlets, (Shakspeare's included), of North and South America, Siberia and Sandwich Islands, will give a free, moral and high colored exhibition in Oberlin, Ohio, and from thence proceed by trade winds to Pithole, and disburse the remainder of the grand prizes.

The object of the concert is truly beautiful. It is designed to give each freedman or woman or freedman's woman's hired man a chaste and inlaid mosaic "bureau" with moire-antique and white tulle trimmings, surmounted by a cast of the "fist" that "slung the ink" that vetoed the first or original bureau. The balance of the funds will be devoted to preparing a home for the orphans and childless resulting from the next war of the roses. Should there be anything left, it will be devoted to sand-papering and painting the derricks of Pithole Creek, or otherwise improving the city.

No pecuniary recompense is expected by the proprietor of this scheme, as he has but a few days to live, and the moss of ages now encircles his beetling brows.

A troupe of first-class singers, accompanied by performers on the tin pan harmonicus and cornet, a spittoon and timbrels, will discourse dulcet strains to the awe-struck multitude.

The celebrated *base* warbler Jack A. Mule will exhibit his wonderful powers of voice—giving imitations of the chipping bird, grindstones and saw-filers.

The Maltese caterwaulers and Swiss Bell Ringers will appear at each entertainment; and Old Swiss himself will ring the anvil chorus, and play an accompaniment on a string of sleigh bells.

No prizes are worth mentioning; all blanks are invaluable. Our arrangements are so perfect that every miserable individual within two miles of the ground—above, below and sideways, will draw a prize.

A. F. Abbott's line of coaches will deliver prizes at the door of the lucky winners' residences.

The tubing and pipe companies will carry passengers at half fare for several days after the drawing.

Look at the following list of prizes and weep:

500 Treadwheel Pianos, eight dog power; no performer required. A yellow-dog, perfectly acquainted with music, given away with each piano. 50 of the most popular ballads of the day, indexed on the dog's tail. Persons wishing canines that play more than 50 tunes, will have to purchase two tickets to *cur-tail* the expenses of lengthening the cur's tail. Also state whether they desire a sentimental, comic or religious dog.

3000 Bushels of ear drops, rings, sleeve and dog buttons, imported directly from Balltown by Isham. No brass in the jewelry or proprietor's face. Oh, no!

13 Wagon loads of North American Watches; self winders; four jewels; holes punched for more. Very valuable as relics of the oil excitement of 1865. These watches were all picked—or selected with great care—from the pockets of the owners.

1 Beautiful Derrick complete, and highly finished.

1000 Seed bags, satin-lined and velvet-trimmed.

12 Magnificent paintings—done in crude oil, by A. Land-seer or speculator.

1 Gorgeous fresco painting, called "Africa Unveiled; or the Source of the Nile."

1 Large bald-headed hog, from Cincinnati.

100 Marble Statues, called "Our Guardian Angels." These figures are taken from life and, represent the members of the Swordsman's Club, on their errands of mercy. Motto—R. C. T.—in the foreground.

1 Beautiful farm, two seconds walk from the Post Office, and well stocked with barns, houses, concert saloons, cows, chickens, dry holes, &c. Those wishing the comforts of a home, with many of its luxuries, ought to draw this prize.

1 Excellent fish pasture near Oil City; well filled with sharks, suckers and gudgeon.

1 Eight story front (1 story rear) house in Oil City. Chimneys built high; pond freshets cannot put out the fires.

2 Sets of well and thimble rigs.

The whole to conclude with a six handed game of three card monte. The winner to receive a beautiful woman with a large family, dwelling house, full supply of soothing syrup and a jug of rum. Young man, do you want a name? or family? Here it is. Draw this prize at once.

The concert will be held near the tin ear and calico eye-brow manufactory, between Holmden street. See our small bills (issued by our washerwoman every week) for full particulars of the' concert or national debt.

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The prize ring was also represented in Pithole by several minor "bruisers," who indulged in their pummelling propensities whenever occasion offered.

The subjoined article is a sketch of "the milling process," (see sketch of the U. S. Treasury Department in Harper's Monthly), which took place in April, 1866:

### A Prize Fight

Came off yesterday afternoon about one mile east of Balltown, between Prof. Ben. Hogan, better known as the "German Benedict," and J. J. Holliday, the celebrated pedestrian, who performed the feat of wheeling a wheel-barrow from Rochester to Buffalo without stopping.

The men were on the ground on time—two o'clock—and went promptly to work. Holliday had choice of ground.

1st Round—Both went good humoredly to work, and after several taps on "mug" and ribs, Holliday came easily to the sod. Time  $2\frac{1}{2}$  minutes.

2d Round—Plugging lively, and Holliday came down hard. Time  $1\frac{3}{4}$  minutes.

3d Round—Sparring slow, and ended by both coming heavily to the ground, in  $2\frac{3}{4}$  minutes.

4th Round—Holliday got in a fine wipe on Hogan's peeper, but finally came down in  $1\frac{1}{2}$  minutes.

5th Round—Two feints on the mug and close. Hogan lifts Holliday clear, and throws him a summersault, and he fell again. Time  $2\frac{1}{2}$  minutes.

6th Round—Holliday rather slow to the scratch, and falls flat in  $1\frac{1}{4}$  minutes.

7th Round—Holliday draws blood on Hogan's nob, and both go to corners in 1 minute.

8th Round—Sparring fast and rough; ended in foul blow by Holliday, when down. Time  $1\frac{1}{4}$  minutes.

This ended the fight.

The following is a description by another reporter, who was seen wending his way towards the scene of action early in the day. It is surmised he held a bottle—perhaps more.

### The Mill on the Bluff.

BY A MODEL ARTIST, WHO WAS ON THE "SPOT" AND GOT "SPOTTED."

About one o'clock yesterday, a multitude, composed of the "helect" of the city, were seen on their winding way to the classic hills which surround our young American town. Not being posted, we supposed the cholera had arrived via the Miller Farm pipe; but upon learning that two of our citizens were going to fight for the championship and the



belt, (which is six-inch and three-ply), we procured two dollars' worth of pasteboard and followed the crowd. The ground was well chosen, and the grassy verdure showed few of the marks of war which afterwards disfigured its fairness. After due handshaking, the opponents came to time and fought the

1st Round—Holliday struck wildly from his left ear, which was followed by Hogan making a pass with his right heel. Holliday then heaved a deep sigh, which struck his adversary in the smeller, and floored him.

2d Round—Both on time and their feet. Considerable cribbage. Hogan making a run of three; while Holliday caromed on his ear and took one for his nob. Both fall heavily at obtuse angles.

3d Round—Nobody hit. Tall swearing and great handfulls of grass torn up by both sides.

4th Round—Hogan seizes Holliday by the seat of his neck and nape of his breeches, and sent him skyward. He went up in 'a minute and came down on a "second," but did not hurt him.

5th Round—Hard-hitting and hair-pulling. Bottles and seconds terribly punished.

6th Round—Owing to time consumed in drinking, this round was not fought.

7th Round—Both very mad; stand upon their heads and make faces at each other.

8th Round—Although in the *ring*, this *round* was not very *square*. Holliday crowed to show that he was game, and, in flapping his wings, hit Hogan in the breadbasket. This was termed "foul," and the sponge thrown up.

This ended the fight. During its progress many wells ceased to flow, and oil men have since been granted suffrage.

\* \* \* \* \*

Another and later scrimmage is described in an article called

## War and Bloodshed.

Just as the dawn of peace begins to brighten the European sky, the horrors of an *uncivil* war are brought to the very doors of our citizens. Yesterday, about one o'clock p. m., the breeze which swept from the north end of Holmden street, brought to our arms the clash of resounding ears, and other sounds suggestive of a battle. On stepping to the door of the gin mill, where we are at work "storing liquors," the awful sight burst upon our distracted vision.

Four of our best citizens were engaged in mortal combat. Their names were W. Hisky, B. Randy, Mickey Stonebruise and Jeemes Rafferty.

When we cast our long-range optics upon the scene, the first two parties already had the better of Mick and Pat, who to show that they could "fight it out on that line if it took several summer—saults," went at it themselves, and in the language of an inspired writer,

"They fit, and fit, and fit, and fit,  
Until tired as they could be;  
And the way they chawed each other up,  
Was gorgeous for to see."

A rest of a few moments was improved by Pat who replaced his right eye in its socket, from which it had fallen during the skirmish; while Mickey, after hunting a few minutes for his nose, at last found that useful member, and borrowing a postage stamp from a bystander, replastered it upon his pensive face.

They again clinched, swore, bit, blowed, tripped and fell into a comfortable mudhole, kindly left by the board of city improvements. "Down to the depths of Pithole went that four hundred" pounds of corn-saturated clay.

Mud to the right of them,  
Mud to the left of them,  
Mud all around them,  
And into it they blundered.

For many minutes did the awe-struck crowd gaze upon the seething and whirling mass of mud and man, but save an occasional smothered "cuss" from the depths below, the silence was profound. The two combatants, getting tired of waiting for the police, came to the surface and their senses, and dissolved partnership by mutual consent.

The fight lasted but a few minutes, and this article might be more brief could we write as fast as the parties fought.

We give this item as a sample of "life in the oil region."

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Here is an extract from a letter from Pithole in 1866.

### Tableaux

Are all the rage at this place. One beautiful and correct taubleau I witnessed not long since. It was entitled the "Oil Man from Home; or a Husband's Devotion."

Scene 1st:—A derrick, and workmen in the foreground. Husband in store clothes and much neck-chain, smoking a cigar on the bull-wheel, while a servant with a peck measure is measuring the receipts of the treasury since the last sale of oil or "sixteenths." The devoted husband has just put the finishing touches to a letter which reads thusly:

DEAR WIFE—I cannot spare you any money for a few weeks as the expenses of the well are large and the returns small. I wear my ragged clothes; am as saving as possible, and am working my fingers off for your sake. I miss you so much. My evenings are spent in looking at your picture, and I go promptly to bed at nine o'clock each night.

Your faithful husband,

---

Scene 2d:—Interior of a "free and easy," at midnight. "Faithful husband" at a table, with arms around a "polite and attentive" "beer slinger," while two or three more are bringing costly wines and cigars.

Gives away his watch; distributes greenbacks like a paymaster, and lets the waiter girl make her own change from his plethoric pocket book.

3d, last and death scene:—Daylight at the derrick. The constant husband and head of family found twisted around the bull-wheel with rope and dead——drunk.

This tableau never fails to interest, and is admired by all who have relatives in the oil region.

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Like Hamlet we were troubled with a ghost which created quite an excitement in its day (or night).

### Ghost No. 1.

Erie may boast of its tragedies, Titusville can claim its share of mysteries and supernatural relations, but all are eclipsed by a haunted house situated in the very heart of this city.

For many weeks have the citizens been alarmed, and numerous attempts been made to discover the cause of the sounds and orgies there heard and seen, but up to the time of writing no clue has been obtained.

Strange as it may seem, every night between the hours of 12 and 1, the ghosts or shadowy forms of several of our best citizens, have been plainly seen passing by the windows of this dwelling, and even their voices distinguished, when they were *almost* known to be in their rooms or places of business, and although closely questioned, deny leaving their rooms during the night.

At times a fearful and marrow-freezing sound, similar to smashing bottles and tumblers, has been heard.

Wild shrieks of demoniacal laughter, accompanied by a hiccoughing sound suggestive of taking poison, have also been heard.

Several gentlemen of means have volunteered to discover this midnight



mystery, and after tearful farewells from their friends, stationed themselves, where a *close* watch could be kept upon the building.

So far no discoveries have been made, and the foolhardy individuals who thus placed their lives in jeopardy, were found at daylight wandering around the streets, apparently speechless from the horrible sights they had witnessed.

It is to be hoped this mystery will soon be cleared up, as several very promising citizens have been obliged to leave town for fear of the ghosts.

But no sooner had this phantom ceased to trouble, than another came to light, in the darkness of midnight.

### Ghost No. 2.

What we are about to relate is strictly true—or rather the source from which we obtained the facts is eminently reliable. Two months or more ago, a family consisting of a father, mother, and several children, removed to this place and took a small house inside the borough limits. We will not at present name the locality. The family had occupied the house only a few days when the different members of it began to hear strange and mysterious noises. These noises were heard at nearly all times in the day and night, and were at first very annoying. For about a fortnight these noises consisted of moans and deep drawn sighs as of some one in terrible agony. They would be heard first in one room and then another. The mother and children were terrified at these supernatural sounds, but the father regarded them with indifference, and insisted that they were merely the effect of a disordered imagination. Notwithstanding the importunities of his wife he refused to remove from the house, and determined to stay and investigate the mystery.

After the lapse of about two weeks and a half the nature of the noises changed, and deep sepulchral groans were heard in different parts of the house at the same time. Sometimes two or three days would elapse without any disturbance or strange sounds, then the noises would commence again and continue for three or four days. Thus matters went on

until last Sunday night, when the family retired to bed as usual. There had been no demonstrations of a ghostly nature for a number of days. At about the hour of midnight the whole family was awakened by a noise resembling a loud peal of thunder or roar of cannon, and immediately thereafter the whole house was pervaded with a strange, wild, wierd light, by which objects were dimly distinguishable. Then there rushed through the room in which the gentleman and his wife slept, a tall white figure, closely pursued by an indistinct black object, the countenance of which was plainly visible, and which presented a demon-like expression. For a few moments after the disappearance of these spectres, the most fearful unearthly yells and piercing shrieks rose upon the midnight air that ever were heard by mortal ears. The inmates of the house were nearly paralyzed with fear. Since that time no supernatural noises have been heard or demonstrations made. If there are any further ghostly appearances at that house our readers shall be told. We surpress names at the request of the parties interested.

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The local of the Daily Record newspaper, is in the habit of giving the readers of that sheet a weekly series of articles under the head of well matters and oil news. The local of the Balltown Astonisher comes out with a chapter entitled

### Dry Hole Matters and Oil News.

A recent trip in a hand basket over the flats and "sharps" shows a renewed quietness and beautiful stillness among some of the best and dryest holes in this vicinity.

Many non-producing wells not mentioned in previous reports are doing about the same heavy business as ever, only more so.

As a sample of what energy, perseverance and gas will do, look at well No. 00, D. Beat farm. The production was formerly 0,000 barrels per day, but by introducing physic and stimulants it was increased to

000 barrels; and since hiring a new set of hands and white-washing the derrick, the yield has been increased nearly as much as the first production exceeded that of the second. The owner has lately been trusted for a tin dipper, and is now dipping oil along the creek, pints being gathered every week.

Well No. 250,003, on the Salt River Company's lands, is having its tubing, driving-pipe and sucker-rods drawn, (the engine and derrick having been drawn to the Canada oil region by a light-fingered gentleman) its hands discharged preparatory to being served as its owners' pockets, i.e., "cleaned out," after which it will be filled up and salted down, when it will no doubt become a good well and prove a permanent investment.

On the Skinem & Swindle farm, No.  $\frac{5}{8}$  is abandoned. Its owners will fall back, bravely contesting the ground.

The Peter Rootentoot well has suspended work since the walking beam was lost in the third sand.

Swearers' tract—(not issued by the American Tract Company). Most of the well owners on this tract are sick of operating—also of a disease known to medical men as "deadbroke," and the only remedy yet discovered in this country is green (black) tea. Well No. 7, on this tract, is being cut up into post holes by some Maine parties, to be sold for second-hand fence post holes to the "bloody Japanese."

The bull-wheel of No. 10 exploded last week, filling the engineer's eyes with tears, his soul with anguish and his mouth with white sand. Operations have since entirely ceased.

The Superintendent of 61, on Poker Bluff, lost his spectacles and glass eye in the well yeaterday, and as they are of more value than the well, the latter will be blown up to obtain them.

The Croton Oil Company, like its namesake, works with a will, and unless something happens *soon*, it will be *some time* before anything occurs. A woodchuck hole is all that presents any show on this really excellent territory.

Many of the derricks have lately been repainted, and an increase of oil has resulted.

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Some of the wells which were gradually failing were treated to a stimulant in the shape of a torpedo. Without saying anything against the use of torpedoes (for they often benefit dry holes if they *explode*) we submit the following account of a

### Torpedo Explosion.

In this age of progression and reason (not Tom. Paines), discoveries and inventions are made every day right in our midst, that if exposed to the public eye would cause the owners' pockets to swell like a seed bag or schoolboy that has been eating dried apples. Especially such inventions as steam telegraph poles, baby or bounty jumpers and torpedoes. Of the latter there are many kinds. The fourth of July, or child's torpedo, that frightens horses and causes ladies to feint a faint when manly support is near; the submarine or naval torpedo which sometimes promotes marines, middies and admirals to the same elevation when it goes off; also the torpedo fish found in the Mediterranean sea; but the most important of all these is the torpedo for oil wells, which when it does not explode in the bowels of the earth and blow up the well, causes the well owners to go off above ground, and blow up the torpedo man.

We learned last week that there was one going off in a few minutes in well No. —, Holmden farm. Taking three days rations, and bidding my family good bye, started for the scene of action. Found the well at last, but it was sunk in the earth until only one end was visible; a pair of clamps was all that prevented its going down further. The torpedo was ready to burst. A big man yelled run, and I did; but no explosion followed the movement, except from the mouth of a bystander, who could not see the joke. We again drew near to the well; the trigger was pulled; another series of movements to the rear—but no explosion. For many



hours we kept these evolutions up, until our soul was worn out, especially our boot sole; but at the earnest solicitation of a friend, we waited another second. We were assured that the "torpedo feller" had a sure thing on it this time. Bystanders pulled out their costly American watches on which no tax had yet been paid.

Soft eyes looked love to eyes  
Which answering spake again;  
And all went merry as a marriage bell,

Except the torpedo, which fizzled, and we left for home a madder and a wiser man.

But really torpedoes are a good thing. I saw one go off last week, but it was on a man's shoulder, and did not have much effect.

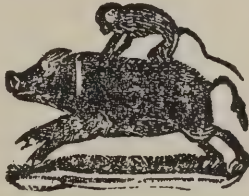
Later—The torpedo has gone off. A red nosed individual was looking in the well, when off went torpedo and man.

Still Later, via. Atlantic Cable—The torpedo blew out the bottom of the well, scattering a party of Chinese tea-pickers at work near Pekin, and throwing oil and gravel all over a Mandarin and family who were performing their morning devotions.

The Superintendent of the well has already sent coopers to China to erect tanks at that end of the well. By the use of a new working barrel he overcomes the attraction of gravitation, and pumps both ways at the same time. The only difficulty so far is to obtain Chinese teamsters who understand English enough to haul oil.

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Read this description of a



Foot Race on Holmden Street.

Since the great retreat of Congressmen at the battle of Bull Run, 1861, or the flight of Jefferson Davis, 1865, the western world has witnessed no such running or speed as that seen Saturday night on Holmden street. The principals were "Scotty," well known as "greased lightning" by Pittsburghers, and Cowdry, who is a descendant of Hiawatha, via. Tecumseh, and who like his ancient relative when he struck his *gail*,

At each stride a mile he measured,  
Hills and mountains left behind him.

At seven o'clock everything was in readiness; the street being lined with people of every rank and condition, pimps, boot-blacks, angels, (fallen of course), news boys, flowing well owners, dry hole speculators, &c., &c. Here might be seen a "Venus" gazing from the upper windows of a free and easy, while right opposite pensively reclining upon the roof of a livery stable could be seen an "adonis," who offered the Morey Farm Hotel against a paper of "fine cut" on the result of the race, but with no takers. The members of the press were allowed the best and safest positions, i.e., as near to a gin mill as possible. The champions were impatiently pawing the plank, attired in a thin veil of gauze which showed their splendid not over-fed forms and the gentle heaving of their manly bosoms could be heard by those residing in Balltown.

First Heat—Both started with a hand spring, Scotty on the inside, Cowdrey fast closing up, and both tearing up the plank awfully. Nothing could be seen of the runners except a streak of dust with an occasional plank or toe nail in the air. One careless individual was knocked down by the wind of these two human cannon balls. Cowdrey ahead this time.

Betting high and fast on both parties. A "Smiley"ing individual bets a ten against a "V" that he would win any bet he took, but he lost, and instead of handing over the expected "saw-buck," pulled out a ten-penny nail. Staterooms and juleps were at once offered for the crowd and taken with a relish.

Heat the 2d—Both start on a square trot, which changed to a counter, and Pittsburgh wins, by coming a slight joke on Cowdry. A "dorg"

suffering from hydrophobia came near being run over by one of the runners, it was difficult to tell which was frightened the most, man or dog.

The 3d Heat—was pretty hot all around; running fast; betting slow; swearing excellent, &c., Scotty again the winner.

The comments by the crowd were numerous and amusing, but the best "*bull*" turned loose belonged to a son of the Emerald Isle, who while trying to induce the crowd to stand back exclaimed: "Be gobbs, ye's wouldn't be running yourselves if ye was standing there."

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Among the many different classes of amusements with which Pithole was blessed (or cursed), the citizens were treated to a series of select entertainments in the shape of pictures by an oil artist; but here is his card and programme to speak for itself.

### Panorama of the Oil Region,

Entered According to a bad act of Congress for the *worst* represented district of Pennsylvania.

The proprietor being thrown out of political business has been forced to go into honest employment, and has after much labor, prepared the following gorgeous series of paintings, which will be exhibited sooner or later to the citizens of Pithole. To suit the times and place the paintings are done in crude oil, and in *fast* colors. The artist has passed through the grades of white-washer, clothes dryer, and meerschaum colorer, and flatters himself he can handle the brush equal to none. Persons disbelieving this statement are requested to call and see the blacking brush he handled the other day. His last great triumph and masterpiece is the coloring of his own nose, which, after years of patient study and labor, is pronounced by all as the most exquisite piece of flesh coloring ever witnessed, and its ruddy glow outrivals the carbuncle when the owner stands in the sun's rays. Gentlemen are requested to keep their heads covered during the exhibition. This is to avoid exposing the Sons of Temperance, who carry the "pledge" bottled up in their hats.

The panorama, proprietor, hired help and all will commence to move as soon as the audience get seated, and the tickets are collected. If the people will watch the back windows they will see this movement.

The Swordsman's Club, Base Ball Club, Stuffed Club and other societies or secret organizations, will be required to pay before getting in. No freedom to the press who may try to *press* their way in. Those possessing notes, due bills, board bills or counterfeit bills against the proprietor, will not be permitted to pass the door-keeper under any pretence whatever—unless they really insist on it. Children not admitted unless muzzled, or strangled at the door,—the rights of old bachelors must be respected. Married men not admitted, unless accompanied by their own or some other man's wife. (N.B.—We do not expect, after this warning, a *single* married man will try to get in; but although we may lose money, our ideas of right shall be respected).

Our list of paintings cover two billion feet of canvass, (which you will see in a great (many) feat), and will be moved by mule power at the rate of an inch an hour, so that none need fear that they will not get their money's worth. N.B.—The price of admission is collected every 15 minutes by the clock. Dissolving views can be seen at the proprietor's bar down stairs. Plain view 15 cents, mixed 20 cents. List of paintings:

1.—Discovery of oil in America; C. Columbus tapping a barrel of lard oil. Twenty years' later; Indians seen dipping their blankets in the United States Company's tanks, thus collecting the "eniznch" or rock oil, which they drank as a beverage.

2.—Striking of the Grant Well by Gen. Grant, who will appear at every exhibition, and with a good club give the manner in which he struck it.

3.—Finding of the Pin Pool well, by Mr. Pool; a big well, a big sell, and a big moral for the young.

4.—Oil Smellers. This picture represents the manner in which they discover wells by the sense of smell, and is valuable on account of the light it throws upon those who knows (nose) so much.



5.—The birth of the "Twins," strictly a family scene. Shows the Twin wells as they appeared when born. This painting is a happy addition to any man's family.

6.—Pithole City, Pa., April 1st, '65. Two mullen stalks with the remains of last year's grasshoppers thereon; a lively scene.

7.—Pithole City, 1866. View of public buildings. Mighty crowd rushing and tramping each other to death in the streets. The bodies of deceased oil men seen protruding from the mud. Forty miles from water and whisky ten cents a smell. A vivid and life-like picture. To add to the effect of this view, a barrel of B. S. petroleum will be emptied over the audience.

8.—View of the Buchanan farm (Rouseville) by moonlight. Old Mr. Ex-Buchanan seen boring for oil with a Ratchet drill. Oil boats waiting for a "pond fresh," &c., &c. A lively marine scene.

9.—The first building in Pithole—a faro bank. "

10.—The last building in Pithole—a church.

11.—"Our Heroes" this is a stencil plate scene and represents the Swordsman's Club at one of its secret sessions.

12.—Business scene at Plumer, Pa. Two old hens scratching in the street; small bald-headed hog leaning against a fence, too poor to grunt without support.

13.—Balltown, Pa., 1866. A birds-eye view of this seaport. A derrick with sheriff's sale notice and worms' nest upon it—the only sign of life visible.

14.—Birth of Pithole Record, September 25th, 1865. Editor up to his ears in mud yelling for copy. The "devil" from below yelling for some one to pull him up on dry land. No "cases" except hard cases; the only shooting stick just lent to shoot pork with. Heavy storm arising; thirteen million copies of the paper to be struck off within ten minutes. Press nearly out of sight in the mud, &c., &c. An awful and beautiful scene, illustrating the excitement of 1865, and showing the workings of the human mind.

15.—Prather City by moonlight. Cats fighting in the foreground; cow bell heard in the distance.

16.—Portrait of an honest oil operator. Moral: be virtuous, unhappy and poor.

17.—Market day in Pithole. Ladies purchasing imitation veal or false calves; also bull-wheel steak for sick husband. A domestic scene.

18.—President of Board of Trade at his labors. Derricks and engines slowly disappearing in the distance. For a sequel to this picture, read list of arrivals at the Canada oil diggings, or city police reports.

19.—Birds-eye view of A. B. Bott's livery stable. Saw horses, clothes horses, sorrel horses, and horse sorrel, plainly visible. This picture always evokes a horse laugh from the audience, and is a beautiful sight for those who love to ride.

20.—The Deserted Village (by Goldsmith) represents the town during a session of the Franklin court. Not an able bodied man visible.

21.—The Dry Holes of Pithole. A fine view of our dryest holes; taken from nature. Those who are interested never grow tired of gazing upon this splendid work of art, and the orchestra at this point always plays something lively and cheering, such as the Rogue's March, Old One Hundred, or Oil Operator's Lament.

We have millions of other paintings that the world will never hear of. Tickets 1.00 each; 12 for 50 cents; 30 for 25 cents, and so on down. Families desiring tickets by the quantities, can have them delivered by the wagon load at their residences by paying the charges of delivery. See our very large bills for particulars.

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### An Oil Theory.

We have been repeatedly asked by different parties to give some theory in regard to the origin of Petroleum. Many have said that a book without a correct "oil theory" would be worthless.

An old citizen whose head was covered with moss, so advanced in age was he, said to the writer one morning, "I am no scholar, nor am I in the habit of using profane language, but I will be essentially d—d, (deduced). if I wouldn't like to know where this oil comes from." Still another individual, a practical operator in dry holes, informed us that he wouldn't give a "red cent for the History unless it contained a correct solution of the oil mystery." Now every geologist, philosopher and bull wheel tender in the country has an opinion of his own, but perhaps the most ingenious theory is that broached by Mr. Wm. H. Hubble, a Philadelphia engineer, who conjectures that—

"Petroleum is a vegetable oil, which is produced in the Pacific Ocean, by the decomposition of sea plants and mixed with salt water. It pervades the open Polar Sea discovered by Dr. Kane, and prevents it from freezing. That being lighter than water, the centrifugal force of the earth in its rotation causes the water or denser fluid to accumulate about the equator, and consequently the petroleum or lighter fluid to separate from it and flow and accumulate about the North pole; that being light and oily it is highly susceptible of capillary attraction; that this sand stone strata crops out into the Atlantic Ocean, and absorbs this oil, inducing it by capillary attraction to flow in a southerly or south-westernly direction; that it crops out again in the Pacific Ocean and the oil there recedes and mingles with the waters of the Pacific, giving the ocean its mild and placid character and forms the well known and oleaginous food for whales which is visible and exists in the waters of the ocean and extends thousands of miles northward and on which they live and derive their oil and is called their feeding ground. In the Pacific Ocean it flows again northward through Behring's Straits, by the same law that made it accumulate in the open Polar Sea—that is, being lighter than water, and not capable of uniting with it; the water, which is heaviest will accumulate about the equator, while this oily light matter will flow to the north pole and there forms the open frozen sea. Thus it performs its great office in the laboratory of nature, flowing in a circle through this particular strata of sandstone under this continent from the

Arctic to the Pacific Ocean by capillary attraction, and there is plainly visible in the water in a coagulated form as the food of whales, prepared in and by the very salt and dense water of that temperature, and flowing in the process of separation for thousands of miles northward forming necessarily the open unfrozen sea, and being the great basin of carbon or oil of the earth for the use of man."

\* \* \* \* \*

But after much persuading and pecuniary compensation we at last secured the services of Prof. Q. Reuskus, the celebrated oil savant, and the following is from his gifted pen:

Petroleum is nothing more or less than an animal oil, possessing all the qualities of lard oil or pig grease, combined with many of the features of that noted animal the skunk (*Americanus polecatibus*). When the great glacier or ice flood swept over this continent from north to south, several centuries since (see Prof. Agassiz' work on the glacial or ice period of America) immense droves of animals, consisting chiefly of Cincinnati hogs and skunks, were swept irresistibly before this mountain of moving ice. The hog and skunk, owing to their unwieldiness and superfluity of fatty substance, were soon overtaken by the glaciers and ground to powder, while the other and more sprightly animals escaped. The two above mentioned animals contain more oil and adipose matter than any other class, and when thus melted or tried as it were in this great crucible of nature the oil was immediately soaked up by the earth and used as a lubricator for its axis, and the gudgeons of the north and south poles, or stored in the secret chambers and cavities of the earth, from whence it is taken by man under the name of rock oil, petroleum, &c.

\* \* \* \* \*

This closes the Professor's article, and although *his* theory may be incorrect, it is quite as plausible as *some others* that have been advanced; and the reader will admit that he has got upon the *right scent*, and that his arguments are *strong* if not very conducive to belief.



### On Borough Government, Candidates for Burgess, &c.

In undertaking the management of borough affairs and organizing a system of government out city officials had no easy task, and much credit is due those who brought order out of chaos, and made a lawless, mud-bound, hastily constructed town, overrun with rogues and rascals, fit to be inhabited by civilized and enlightened human beings. It is not necessary to go into a detailed account of our city officers and government. As in towns of larger growth, when the day for election of borough officers drew near, there was quite as much wire-pulling and political chicanery witnessed as is frequently seen at Washington or during a voting contest for the Presidential chair. That civilian outsiders may know how city fathers are elected in Pithole, we append the following "suppressed documents" from different candidates for Burgess at a recent city election. They are models of consistency, if not masterpieces in the literary line. Candidate number one says:

"I wish to announce myself as a perfectly independent candidate for Burgess, Mayor, Alderman, Inspector General, Poor Overseer, or Overseer of the Poor; in fact I want an office so bad that I will do anything that will enable me to get my name in print occasionally, and allow me to grow fat at the public crib."

"Feeling confident that the citizens of Pithole want a man whose morality renders him notorious, I offer myself as the lamb ready for slaughter. As I have successively belonged to the Locofoco, Whig, Democrat, Republican, Copperhead and Abolition parties—often supporting every candidate at elections—I now expect every one will support me irrespective of party; and solemnly promise, in case of my election, to work for anybody and at any labor. Furthermore, I will faithfully do all hereinafterwards described: First—abolish the pernicious practice of chewing tobacco, or anything else, while on the public streets. Second—Dry up the throwing of orange shells or pea-nut peels upon the sidewalk. Third—By personal examination, each day, see whether the liquors of the different bars are watered or not. Fourth—Stop all silent

laughter or loud conversation in the streets. Fifth—By placing an embargo on the railroads, prevent strangers from coming in, and thus let the old inhabitants have a chance. Sixth—Compel every person to be in their own or some other house by nine p. m.,—if found in some other house they will be dealt with as were the sandwiches of Salem by our ancestors. In fact, it will be the constant endeavor of the undersigned to make the town as orderly and quiet as Petroleum Centre, West Hickory and other towns of like stamp, so that you can hear a pin drop any hour of day or night. Very anxiously, JOHN SNOOKS.

P. S.—If elected, I will put a stop to tying dogs to little kettles' tails. P. S. again—If two able-bodied men will vote for me, I shall be elected, for every man in town is a candidate for Burgess, and each one is going to vote for himself. J. S.

But a few days after another individual came forward and defined his position thusly:

"I have waited now, four long days, without hearing a single word of encouragement from either of the candidates for Burgess. I had supposed that each of them would, long before this, have come down handsomely in order to prevent any exposures that I might make. J. Snooks, Esq., one of the candidates, who hasn't any character to speak of, has called on me for the purpose of securing my influence at the coming borough election. But he couldn't secure. He excels in the art of flattery, but he isn't much of a fellow when you come right down to cash principles. I know what the quality of his whiskey is, but know nothing about the color of his stamps. He's a genuine Dedbete, one of the real old stock, but he can't secure my influence on the strength of relationship. Where there is money there my heart is, and any man who don't come down generously with the rhino, is an object of my contempt.

"Sterling Old Honesty, another candidate for Burgess, expects to be elected on moral grounds. He won't find those grounds anywhere in or around pithole. To speak after the manner of the wicked, morality is 'played' hereabouts. Sterling Old Honesty won't get six votes unless he changes his tactics, and pays me a good round sum to either go in or

come out for him, which he don't seem inclined to do. Under existing circumstances, and convinced that the proper man has not yet been presented to the intelligent voters of Pithole, as a candidate for Burgess of their gay and thriving old borough, I take pleasure in yielding to the wishes of my numerous friends, and announcing myself as an unterrified, independent candidate for Burgess of the Borough of Pithole City. If all the voters in Pithole to whom I owe small sums of borrowed money will give me their united and hearty support, I will freely forgive them each and all the little debts which I owe them. If all the saloon keepers who have whisky bills against me will do me the same favor I will continue to patronize them as heretofore. With these two classes for me I am sure to be elected, for they constitute a majority of the voting population of the borough. If elected I shall give my personal attention to the finances of the borough, taking care that no one besides myself steals a cent of the people's money. Now that I am fairly in the field, I am very anxious to be elected, and from now until after election I shall become all things to all men that I may thereby secure a vote or two. I shall appear in any number of different characters from this time until after election. To the drunkard in the gutter I shall be as a man and a brother, and every such unfortunate cuss that I come across I shall help home in the most quiet and gentle manner possible—so quiet and gentle that he'll not miss the pocket-book and watch, which in all such cases I shall feel it my duty to take charge of for safe keeping. When I am with the members of the Swordsman's Club, I shall talk morality and speak frequently of the benefits to be derived from treasuring religious counsels. I expect to get the vote of the club because I am an "ornery" member of that ponderous body. I trust that from the bold and manly stand which I have taken upon all questions of public importance, I shall receive the undivided support of the people of Pithole. Somebody has got to support me, and it might as well be them as anybody else. All candidates now in the field will have a chance to withdraw honorably, and I hope soon to see them gracefully retiring from the contest, and giving their support to

A. DEDBETE, Professor."

By the time the citizens had thoroughly perused the foregoing paper, candidate No. 1 came out with another card as follows:

"As the time for Borough election draws near, the number of candidates increases, and at the present rate we shall soon have to import voters and nominees from adjoining towns. Now I am extremely desirous of holding some good fat office, and will sacrifice anything except my money and my appetite to obtain the same. I can offer better inducement to voters than any other man who is running. (Voters are requested to step into my back room to see and taste for themselves.) I am a Reformed Engine Thief. Was engaged in my profession for several months until it proved too *confining* for my health, and I reformed. From an intimate knowledge of the habits of Thieves, Pimps and D. Beats, I know just where to look for stolen property. Of course I should require a considerable bonus before doing this. I will impress it upon the minds of our city police that they must not arrest any citizen of this twon for any offence, but confine their efforts strictly to strangers and sickly individuals, or small boys from adjoining towns. I also have a plan of my own for subjugating hardened criminals. Immediately after I take the "Burgatorial Chair," I will cause the city sidewalks to be widened, as some of our citizens have intimated that our young men often find it extremely difficult to navigate the present narrow and shaky concerns. The reports being industriously circulated by my opponents that if elected I will banish all improper characters from the place, is false. Dry Goods Merchants, Drug Store men and bar-tenders, can go on ordering goods without fear. I belong to the Odd and Even Fellows, Free Brick Masons, Swordsman's Club, and as an easy drinker succeed far beyond my own expectations. That the people may know who they are voting for, I append the following description of myself: Height by liquid measure 12 feet 5—dry measure, 5 feet 12. Am light draft; have lately been re-coppered inside; have excellent storage capacity for meat and spoon vituals; consume my own steam, and am clipper built. One of my flashing eyes is black, the other a mixture of blue and black, the colors being skillfully blended by the hand of an artist and bruiser. My



teeth are even and new, and will remain on exhibition at the pawn-broker's until I can raise sufficient money to redeem and set them. My form is large and possesses the beauty of the alligator with all the sprightliness of the elephant. My carriage is very graceful. (N. B.—it is a four-wheeled carriage with a new dash-board; red stripes; tar pot slung underneath, and a yaller dog behind). I have a hitch in my gait, and as there is always during the wet season an impediment in my speech, no fear need be entertained that I will give hasty decisions while in court. My complexion and character are dark and my temperament billious. My life is insured, and as my wife eloped yesterday there is now no reason why I should not live to the allotted age of man—or woman. My marriage certificate is plainly visible when I remove my hat, in the shape of a scar resembling a frying pan. I never drink; but sometimes pour a little stimulant down. I believe in Ghosts, the Fourth of July; take Ayer's Almanac, and never told but one lie: that was when asked by my school teacher, "Where did you get your whisky?" I, like Washington, replied, "I did it, sir, with my little hatchet." Some say I resemble Washington in this particular: whereas he always wore a 'que' or pig tail on the back of his head, I always have a chew of pig tail in my mouth. (N.B.—Patent right or left secured on that joke—i.e., if it seems to take well). If the above list of recommendations will not lift me into office, I shall have to wash up, put on good clothes and thus effectually disguised, run over another name than JOHN SNOOKS.

"P.S.—My particular object is to defeat Prof. Dedbete, who is aspiring muchly since his name appeared on one of the 290 tickets. J. S.

"P. S. some more—My photograph can be seen on all the boxes containing my kangaroo salve or all-heel ointment, 10 cents a box. J. S.

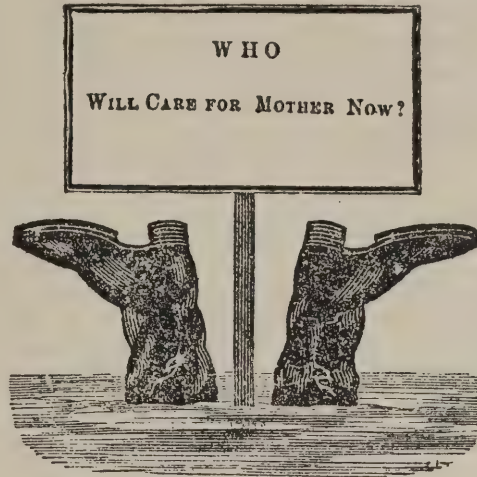
"P. S. three times and out—No postponement on account of the weather. I shall 'run' if I don't lay up a cent. J. S."

It is with regret that we announce the defeat of both these promising candidates, who after the election each came out with a piteous wail over their lost hopes. So much for our would-be officials, who are patiently waiting for the next yearly election to run again.

### Pithole Ladies.

"But were there no women in your city?" methinks I hear some "very gentle reader" say while perusing the pages of "ye history;" and in answer to this enquiry would say that although now blessed by a large number of citizens of the gentler sex, there was a time when female society was unknown in Pithole. Our plank sidewalks were not "tramped" by anything less than a number nine oil boot, and a jockey hat and feather were never seen. We well remember the excitement caused by the advent of two fair equestrians, who were paying their first visit to Pithole. Every able bodied man in the place rushed to the door of his sanctum, and gazed in wonder and admiration upon this strange sight. And when an enterprising dry goods dealer imported a "select assortment of duplex-elliptic hoop skirts," with what shouts of derision was he greeted as he hung them out one morning to attract attention from the passers by. The idea of any customers appearing for the same seemed absurd. Although later in the year many oil operators and business men brought their families to reside here, yet at the time of which we write the difficulties attendant upon getting here, the lack of comforts and society after arriving, the muddy streets, and the insults which a lady must necessarily be subjected to in a town like this, all served to render it one of the least desirable localities to be found, wherein to bring a wife or sister. Few would hardly recognize in the orderly, quiet and business-like city of to-day, with its neat-looking houses, spacious side-walks and planked streets, the demoralized, muddy, and scraggy-looking town of a year since. Speaking of mud, and the perils of navigation upon Holmden street in 1865, after gazing a few hours upon the following cut the reader may peruse the annexed extract from the gifted pen of an "oil correspondent" who was sojourning here at that time:

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"I now give you a short chapter on mud and heroism. Ancient and modern history furnishes innumerable instances of woman's courage, and bravery. But the ladies of Pithole City have the enviable satisfaction of proving and having proved to a doubting world that they are entitled to a bright niche in the historian's temple of fame in memory of their heroic deeds. Sherman's march to the Dead Sea is conceded to be the greatest feat of "hoofing" done by any army; they were healthy strong men, (instead of women), inured to hardships and danger—young men, who didn't care a continental cuss for anything, not even for poultry or roast pig. So much for introductory. Suppose yourself to be standing upon the corner of Holmden and First streets: Coming down Holmden street are two of Eve's fair daughters. Though not a shoemaker, you are almost willing to swear that they wear 'two and a half high gaiters,' nicely fitting white hose, snowy drapery, etc. What if they are marked with a few spots of mud? They arrive at the corner. Wellington, during an engagement while a company of men, volunteers as a folorn

hope passed him, noticed a man deadly pale, but whose undimmed lustrous eye bespoke to do or die. 'That man,' said the 'Iron Duke,' 'has true courage: he knows the danger, but does not fear it.' A parallel case with the ladies; they hesitate not a moment; give a look into each other's eyes,—they dare not trust to words—

Each looked on hill, and vale, and plain,  
As what they ne'er might see again,

With compressed lips, a discriminating elevation of drapery, they boldly step out for the opposite shore, for they well know that a bottomless pit intervenes. We stand upon the brink with breathless anxiety, ready to plunge in and rescue the fair creatures, or with them find a muddy grave. They are half—three-quarters of the way—they leap ashore and are safe! Landed, they bring the high heels of their nice little two and a halves down two or three times, look up with what a soldier would call a 'bully-for-me' expression, and pass on."

### Big Bugs From Abroad.

Nearly all who were at Pithole in the month of September, 1865, remember the excitement caused by the advent of the "English Capitalists," who in seeing the sights of America of course would not return to their native shores without visiting Pithole. Those who attended the dinner gotten up for the illustrious foreigners, will no doubt find the following article interesting. It is inserted as a choice bit of Pithole history.

\* \* \* \* \*

Among the many "big bugs" that visited the place in the days of "mud and speculation" (not including the big bugs that ever infested many of the hotels), was a party of English Capitalists, then on a tour through the United States, getting free rides on the different railroads, looking up oil stock, and investing their spare change in mock auctions, dry holes,



and other American Enterprises. This illustrious party visited Pithole September 29th, 1865, and stopped at the Chase House. The following is almost a correct list of the names of the gentlemen who composed the party: Mr. Porton Meto (son of Sir Porton Meto), Mr. Gohn Joddard, Mr. Ragustus A. Waxton, Sir Gilliam Wrain, Mr. Wenry Hixton, Signor Lillion Leo (a Banish Spanker), Mr. Jawrence Lohnstone, Mr. D. Surfee, Mr. W. Noods, and the Right Bonorable Mr. Hurrington. During the repast when nothing could be heard but the clatter of jaw bones, mingled with cries for hash, many of the gentlemen alluded to the excellent taste of the "vittels," and seemed surprised that the "dishes" should be so free from a taste of petroleum. "The mere fact," said the speaker, "of the cooks 'throwing up' such a 'square meal' as this, will for ages serve as an additional 7:30 bond of friendship 'between the two countries.'" One of the party, after putting away twelve or fifteen plates of gravel hash, arose to his feet, and in the exquisite tones that ever characterize a true and polished gentleman, said: "Ladies and Gentlemen!" (Here he was reminded there were none but gentlemen present). "From the time when I first gazed upon clam chowder, although I have since tasted boiled rats in China, and tallow candles in Russia, devoured mule steak with the 100-day militia men, supped with the cannibals of the Fee Gee Islands, breakfasted with the German on bologna and pretzel, and dined on the Thanksgiving turkey of the Yankee, I have never tasted such a dish as that! (Cheering, and cries of hear! hear!) And in the language of Alex the big, 'I can't get no such hash, not for my chewin'; no, sir!' " Saying which the speaker fell slowly back into his seat, and one dry hole operator warbled in a basso-relievo voice, the song, "I'm lonely since my well give in." It must be remembered that the English and Yankee style of eating is vastly different, for while John puts away his nourishment in a slow and methodical manner, after the style of the boa constrictor, Jonathan bolts his grub in large mouthfuls and without chewing, like the ostrich; but on this occasion a truly American dinner was treated with real British attention, and not less than 24 hours were spent in filling the bread-baskets of the party assembled.

During the pauses between the mouthfuls, a few thousand copies of the Pithole Record were distributed among the guests, with the compliments of the publishers. The paper was kindly received by all; and then followed some of the smartest sayings and wittiest remarks we ever went anywhere; A few of which we subjoin: First speaker—"Jonah seems to have been the first Olican." Second speaker—"If he was, he got sucked in, and did not strike a dry hole either." Here followed heavy horse laughter, and the assemblage was assured that the joke was purely original; if it was not, it was so badly mixed up that the originator would fail to recognize it. A very excellent toast was offered, called "cream toast;" it was taken with a relish by all. The poet of the party then prepared the following toast, which was drank standing,

"The Pithole Daily Record—  
Long may she flutter,  
And the Editor's bread  
Be covered with butter."

The inventor of this "goak" collapsed immediately after perpetrating it, and was carried out on a toasting fork. Signor Lillion Leo arose and stood up, and remarked the following: "I am happy to say that America is the best country of all. I came here many years before Columbus was discovered, and when only ten miles of railroad were built; but I must close, I so much spoil your English." (Cries of "oh, no! that's a mistake, go on!" etc.) Another gentleman, with a champagne bottle in each hand, and their contents in his stomach, said: "My friends, no one can deny that American energy and enterprise is indeed wonderful. Look around you, and say if you can, that the energy and enterprise of the American people is not great. Yes, it is very evident that the Americans possess energy and enterprise that is truly astonishing. Look me right in the eye, and say aught against the energy and enterprise of the American citizen, if you dare." How much longer this speech would have continued, we are unable to say; but just as the speaker was launching out on the energy and enterprise question for the sixth time, an enterprising and energetic delegate suddenly threw a quid of well

chewed tobacco which struck the talker square in the mouth and the rest of the speech was lost to posterity. Before their departure, the whole party united in saying that Pithole City—which came to life in June, 1865, and in less than sixty days changed its trees to shanties, its shanties to houses and its houses to mansions, and from a few backwoodsmen to a population of 10,000—was the greatest of all the wonders of both continents. Soon after this the distinguished visitors paid the hostler and boot-blacks for blacking their horses and holding their boots while at dinner, and then departed, with many kind wishes from the citizens of Pithole; and no doubt highly pleased with their visit to the oil region.

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Every individual in the United States that ever heard of Pithole, has also heard of the organization (a sketch of which we give below) known as the



### Swordsman's Club.

Was organized by George Burchill, of the United States Petroleum Company, in the summer of 1866. Perhaps no local society or secret organization has ever attained the celebrity now possessed by this club. Being a secret society we are compelled to be brief in regards to its "workings" and the public is thus deprived of many interesting facts connected with its history. One of the many objects of the "Swordsmen" was to establish a series of amusements of a high order. To give concerts and balls which for style, selectness and elegance should not be equalled by anything of similar character in the oil region. Like all new enterprises the

Club met with much opposition on the start. Stories were circulated defaming the character of its officers. Many were persuaded into the belief that it was originated for the purpose of holding carousals and bacchanalian revelries. It was publicly announced that members of the Club were in the habit of frequenting low and vicious places. This story probably arose from the fact that upon one or two occasions a Swordsman had been seen entering the doors of a concert saloon, where he had gone to rescue some friend, and thus carry out the principles of the order. Notwithstanding these libelous reports and falsifications, the Club continued to increase in numbers and notoriety until it was decided to give the first Promenade Concert and Ball, which was held the 3d of August, 1866, and pronounced by all present as the finest affair ever witnessed in the oil region. Another soiree was given October 12th, 1866, and this entertainment exceeded the first as much as the first excelled anything previously given. Hundreds of strangers attended this ball. The music had been procured at immense cost from a distant city, and was the best in the country. The arrangements, the taste shown in decorating the dancing hall, the good order maintained, all added to the prestige gained by the Club. Another Reunion was held Thanksgiving Eve, 1866. The weather was very disagreeable, a heavy rain pouring constantly. Landslides upon the different railroads prevented many from getting here, but in the face of all these obstacles a large party was present, and nothing occurred to mar the reputation already sustained by the Club. The decoration of the hall was far superior to any former occasion, and the manner in which everything moved off exhibited the harmony and good feeling existing between the members of the Club. By special permission we are permitted to give a part of the questions usually asked candidates for admission: "Who are you, anyhow?" "What is your normal condish?" "Do you own a flowing well?" "At what depth do you seed-bag?" "What was your income last year?" "What was your wife's income last year?" "Are you thirsty?" [Here follows some movements and mysterious manipulations known only to the B. B. F's, or those who have passed the third degree].

"Are your forefather's living?" "Are your foremothers living?" "Are you in the third sands of your life?" "Did you run for Burgess at the last borough election?" If the candidate answers these and many other questions to the satisfaction of the examining committee, he is, after passing through the "Inquisition," admitted as a member, i.e., if he survives the operation. We give the following list of the first officers of the Club: Pard B. Smith, H. O. M.; E. A. Kelley, O. P. S.; V. H. McCord, I. S. X.; George E. Coutant, H. M. B.; John McDonald, X. C. M.; George Burchill, M. X. G.; M. E. Bassett, S. O. S. At a recent re-election of officers the Club elected the following named gentlemen they being considered perfectly worthy to bear the honorable initials attached to their names—to divulge the meaning of which is slow death: George Burchill, C. R. B.; A. D. Miller, S. T.; Charles Isham, S. G. C.; Emmet Fleming, O. R. A.; S. S. Hill, S. S. H.; George Thompson, K. U. Q.; John McDonald, R. J. S.; Dr. Newcomb, S. G. S.; M. E. Bassett, V. Z. O. The initials of the Swordsman's Club are "R. C. T." They represent the motto of the organization which is "Religious Counsels Treasured". They also stand for the three greatest enemies the Swordsmen ever had to contend with, but we are forbid being personal in this matter, and will drop the subject by saying that among its members the Club numbers four Congressmen, two Ex-Governors; one great showman, besides hundreds of the most wealthy and influential men in the country.

## PITHOLE AND ITS SURROUNDINGS.

With Pithole there sprung into existence several minor towns each one of which had hoped itself the most favored, and thought itself a formidable rival of the "Pit," but that idea was soon exploded, as the "city on the hill" increased in proportions and population so rapidly. Among the most noted of these "satellite" towns that surround the "fixed star" of Pithole, are Prather City, Balltown, Adamsville, Dawson



Center and Clarktown. It is amusing and instructive in these later and more quiet times to gaze upon the incipient towns which adorn almost every farm in the vicinity, and see the elaborateness and care displayed by the "founders of the cities" in surveying the streets and giving them such names as Broadway, Morey Avenue, Chestnut street, and others no less grand and visionary. It is perhaps needless to say that the air castles and ambitious hopes oft indulged in by those who dealt in "city lots" were never realized, and many of the supposed business thoroughfares through which it was hoped would tramp busy crowds of men, or whirl the elegant barouche of the oil millionaire, never presented a more lively scene than—a flock of geese feeding, or the passage of a solitary oil team. It is remarkable and true that every oil operator of any magnitude no sooner purchased a few "choice leases" than they were laid off into city lots and public squares, and exposed to the speculative world under the titles of Tripeville, Smith City, Jonestown and others quite as elegant. The first one of these towns that came to life and perished about the same time is

### Balltown.

This town, which at one time was considered the metropolis of oildom, is located upon the C. M. Ball farm, about one-half mile northeast of Pithole City. It was first called Petrolia, but from some unexplained cause, that euphonious title was dropped, and the present name assumed. This place did at one time present a lively and business-like appearance. Its numerous hotels, boarding houses, stores, &c., doing a large business, and crowds of people filling the streets. We believe the census of Balltown in October, 1865, was 1,200, and in October, 1866, 63 all told. Twice Balltown has suffered severely from fire, and from the effects of which it has never recovered. In 1865 this town was the general rendezvous of the teamsters then engaged in hauling oil to Titusville. But one year later and it was the summer resort of wealthy operators and their families. We submit the following extract from a letter written during the height of the match-making and crinoline season at Balltown

in 1865. The writer has evidently been "surf bathing" in the briny waters of Pithole Creek, which accounts for his prosiness: "Tilting, as practiced by the belles of this place, renders it positively unsafe for a young man to appear upon the street unattended. Some of the titlers are so expert that they can break a man's heart at eighty rods. One little divinity, whose father owns a derrick on the Veridri farm, can bring down her man (on his knees) with the accuracy of one of Berdan's sharp shooters; besides being a good judge of distance, she knows just what elevation to give in order to wound or kill. The early afternoon is devoted to fixing, fanning and flirting by the ladies, swimming, swearing and swigging by the gents, followed by dancing, drinking and driving in which all participate. Moonlight, music and match-making by parents at sundown. Deviltry, drunkenness and debauchery by young bloods in the evening, followed by dizziness and doctors' bills in the morning. At an undress party the other evening, the following notabilities were present: Mrs. B. S. Oyle, who was in a corn-juice colored delain poplin, with plush waist,—her hair was dressed a la derrick and fastened at the top with a small golden sand-pump; she makes a sensation when she appears on the promenade or indulges in a glass of ale in some restaurant as she frequently does, and many promising young men are numbered among her followers. Miss Parafine is pronounced by all as the prettiest pill yet offered for public appreciation. Her father formerly sold "soap fat," and she made cigars for a living; but when Pithole was so excited in 1865, Old Parafine went into the wholesale pea-nut trade on Pig Avenue, and passed successively through the grades of clerk, proprietor and bankrupt, until he retired from business with a stocking full of shinplanters and a stock consisting of three bushels of pea-nut shells. He is known as the largest dry hole owner in Venango county. Old Mr. Sampson Post and daughters are here. The Misses Post are noted for the simplicity of their manners and dress. Their attire consists of ear drops of sand-rock solitaire, small lace collar fastened with silver sucker-rod swivel, and plain gold finger ring in imitation of "driving pipe" band. Widow Benzine is sojourning here also. Her husband was

killed not long since by a pair of "jars" falling on him—poor woman, she has never recovered from that jar. Miss Arabella Reamer is decidedly the leader of the beau-monde at this point, and for the benefit of outsiders we give the following description of her toilet the morning after her father struck a 200 barrel well. The fact that we were formerly the fashion editor of the Tripeville Daily Tripod, will add to the description of the dress, which was of gray mohair, festooned in double column at half distance with velvet bows, gathered under the ears by long tassels of twisted tatting, which were passed through the lower gusset by a chaste loop of hemp packing, tacked onto the third scallop; flounces of costly flannels were confined to the shoulders by a delicate gudgeon of the same material; several stylish hawser-laid rubber chains passed around the waist and were attached to the coquettish head-gear, composed of American fruits and flowers among which were the sunflower and pumpkin; a charming little Poodle dog completed this bewitching 'tout ensemble.' " The previous article is enough to show the public that Balltown was at one time the headquarters of "Le Bon Ton." Next comes

### Prather City,

Which is located upon the bluff portion of the Rooker farm, and formerly contained several fine hardware and grocery establishments besides many other buildings. The chief attraction, however, of this place is the Bonta House, an elegant structure—a description of which is given in another part of the work. A fire in the summer of 1866, destroyed the hardware establishment of Dithridge & Levake, besides one or two other buildings which were never rebuilt. The recent "strikes" in the vicinity of the Bonta House may cause a rise in rents and city lots, and Prather City will become the business center of operations on the bluffs.

### Adamsville.

The little collection of houses dignified by the above title is situated upon the Hiner farm, one mile due east of Pithole City, and contained in 1865, 500 inhabitants. The Coal Mine of J. S. Davis & Co. is near this

town, which is gradually disappearing from view, being used up for kindling wood by indigent individuals without morals or money.

### Clarktown

Was once an enterprising village on the Morey farm, containing several good hotels and stores, besides a machine shop and other buildings not usually seen outside of older and organized cities. Most of the buildings are still standing, but the inhabitants have long since departed.

### Dawson Centre.

This place is located on the Dawson farm, and its history is worthy of perusal. Its chief attractions are as follows: It is the terminus of the Titusville Plank Road. If the traveler escape the muddy perils which beset him between Pithole and this point, he is cheered by the thought that a plank road affords safe and speedy means of transportation from "Dawson" onwards. It is also the last place where the weary traveler can get a drink for a distance of eighty rods and after once stopping at this oasis, it is generally the last place at which a thirsty man *does* drink. The St. Louis & Pithole Petroleum Company have an office at Dawson Centre, and there are a few good wells belonging to this Company in the vicinity. This town is to Pithole as Paris is to the fashionable world, namely, the headquarters of fashions. A correspondent of some ladies' magazine writing from here, in 1865, when flounces and fashions were raging, says:

"In nothing do the inhabitants of this Centre exhibit more charming fancies or consummate foolishness than in the composition of fashions. A dear duck of a hat worn much now, is called La Fryingpanni, and is an imitation of a skillet, fastened on the head with ribbons, in imitation of pork-rinds; this is suitable only for domestic ladies and cooks. Hair is not worn this season, the head being smoothly sand-papery, varnished, and all the phrenological developments colored, numbered, labelled and illustrated with India ink. This novel style causes much commotion among those whose bumps are lacking, and many are the devices used

to conceal the deficiency, and swell such bumps as virtue, humility, love of home, economy, and others which are usually missing from a fashionable woman's head. Many wear a neatly-fitting plaster cast with prominent traits strongly developed. A stranger is introduced, he sees some fine bumps, is pleased and finally marries her. During the honeymoon he playfully hits his wife over the head with a stool, when off comes the plaster, and she stands forth unmasked. Many craniums are grained in imitation of American woods; at any soiree may be seen maple, oak, beech, and not a few basswood heads. \* \* One admirable character was exhibited by the Countess Hop Snop de Gobble, called photography; the dress was white, not low enough to be called immodest or show her delicate copper-toed slippers, but sufficiently high in the ear to look well. It was trimmed with the carte de visites of the many unfortunates who have been victims to her smiles. A magnificent full length vignette of her thirteenth husband hung over her beautiful heart, the whole being toned to a proper shade by a thin covering of hemp packing. On the head was a one-horse-power camera, with buffalo robe veil hanging down behind. This dress is very silly and costly, which will at once recommend it to American ladies. I could write more in regard to the different costumes representing birds, but forbear. The swallow is plain and pretty; the humming-bird very showy, the geese-hawk neat and fussy; the mud-hen costly and gorgeous; the crow dark and suitable for mourning dress."

\* \* \* \* \*

This closes the sketches of our neighboring towns, which are each entitled to a more complete history than we have given.

In explanation to the reader, we wish to say that never, in all our searches after items of history, could we find an individual capable of giving any details in regard to the early settlement or incidents connected with the aforesaid towns.

Therefore the writer has been forced to draw heavily upon his imagination, and it is hoped it will be overlooked.



### The Forty Thieves.

Like the Swordsman's Club, this organization, which is an extensive one, possesses a world-wide reputation, and like that body also claims among its members some of the wealthiest operators in the country; but unlike the Swordsmen, the Thieves are all middle-aged men, although not old in crime, as their name would indicate. This body of men is supposed by many to be a set of thieves and rascals who steal everything they can lay their hands on, from the butter off a sick darkey's pancake, to an engine, derrick or saw mill. But a day or two since as one of these (supposed) robbers was visiting a neighboring town, he was addressed by a gentleman (who had through some mysterious agency lost a string of tubing) who asked if he, the "Pithole Thief," knew anything in regard to that set of "forty thieves," for he suspected they had got his tubing. Of course the faithful member of the "forty" divulged not the secrets of the order. It is believed by many that the President of the organization holds his office only by virtue of his remarkable thefts (having once stole an engine house, engine, derrick and all without being detected or awaking the two drillers asleep in the engine house), and that no person is permitted to join its forces without he has "clamped" at least a string of tubing or casing. Whether this is true or not we are unable to say; but with these preliminary remarks will proceed to give the origin of the name which is as follows: Nearly every one who has heard of oil and oil wells, has also heard of the dishonesty of oil well superintendents. The thousands of would-be millionaires who came to Pithole in 1865, and lost their fortunes in various foolish speculations, upon their return home ashamed to own that their stamps were lost thro' their own stupidity and carelessness, laid the blame upon the (so called) dishonest superintendent. This was repeatedly done, until the names well Superintendent and Thief were synonymous. This band of Thieves and the city police have ever been on the most intimate terms—whether this speaks well for the police, the thieves, or *vice versa*, we are unable to determine. In the fall of 1865, there came to Pithole a venerable representative of the class known as dry hole owners, from the town of Lansing, Mich., whom we shall call

Mr. Smart; this ancient Wolverine had speculated and lost a few thousand dollars somehow or somewhere upon Pithole territory, and he came with the intention of finding where his cash had gone to; "these rascally superintendents couldn't pull his ancient wool over his optics, not much!" The first evening of his arrival he made the acquaintance of a few of the Forty Thieves, who thought they could have a little sport, and that a little judicious foolishness might help the old gentleman; he was led into a room where the Forty occasionally indulged in billiards by way of recreation, and where a game was then in progress between two not first class players. Mr. S. was confidentially informed that this was a match game for \$1,000 a side; at this his eyes protruded and he looked at each face intently, but not a smile illumined the pensive countenances of the Thieves, who at every scratch, with great solemnity would coolly pull out \$1,000 treasury notes, and bet them upon single shots. Other games followed and betting grew livelier; thousands of dollars (apparently) changed hands during the evening, and Mr. S. retired to dream of "dishonest Superintendents" and the manner in which stockholders were swindled. The next evening witnessed the same scene, only with more excitement and heavier bets. At last one individual offered all the oil in the company's tanks of which he was a representative, saying if he lost he could make false returns to the property holders. (Here Smart's eyes were clear out of his head). During the evening thousands of dollars and many tanks of oil changed hands on the result of the games, and even Mr. S. wagered his only remaining 16th and lost; this was, however, returned to him before his departure, which occurred soon after his "night among the Forty."

The members of this order are as gentlemanly, honest and genial set of individuals as can be found upon this sublunary ball of dirt. The President of the Forty Thieves is known as the "distinguished member from Mercer," and holds his office by virtue of being the superintendent of a well that produced 100,000 barrel of oil and never declared a dividend.

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Appendix  
to  
The History of Pithole

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By  
Ernest C. Miller



## GAZETTEER OF TOWNS, ETC.

(Unless otherwise mentioned, all towns are in Venango County, Pennsylvania)

**ADAMSVILLE**—one mile east of Pithole on the Hyner (or Hiner) farm. Once a coal mine operated here but the few houses at the place disappeared along with Pithole.

**BALLTOWN**—one-half mile northeast of Pithole on the former farm of C. M. Ball. The settlement was first called Petrolia but later the name was changed to Balltown. The greatest population at any time was 1,000.

**CLARKTOWN**—on the Morey farm at Pithole. During 1865 and 1866, stores, hotels and dwellings were numerous but all were deserted prior to 1867.

**DAWSON CENTER**—on the Dawson farm, a mile and one-half north of Pithole. This was the terminal of the Titusville Plank Road.

**FRANKLIN**—on the Allegheny River eight miles southwest of Oil City. The town was laid out under an act of 1795 as Venango. Still earlier, the site was selected as strategic by the French in their attempt to control the Allegheny Valley. Where French Creek meets the Allegheny River they built a redoubt and called it Fort Machault. After the English came into possession, the fortification was renamed Fort Venango. Franklin is the county seat of Venango County.

**MILLER FARM**—about six and one-half miles south of Titusville along Oil Creek. By some oil men the place was called Miller Station.

**OIL CITY**—seventeen miles south of Titusville at the junction of Oil Creek and the Allegheny River. It has always been the best known town in the Pennsylvania oil regions and during the "boom" period was generally the largest.

**OIL CREEK**—the stream bearing this name rises from Oil Creek Lake in Bloomfield Township, Crawford County. It flows south through Riceville, Centreville and Titusville, then passes into Venango County and continues to Oil City. Along the seventeen mile stretch between Titusville and Oil City were found many of the great "gusher" wells of the early oil development. Prior to the settlement of this area by the whites, the Indians skimmed oil from the water of the stream.

**OLEOPOLIS**—located where Pithole Creek flows into the Allegheny River or seven miles south and slightly west of Pithole. The town was laid out by the Baltimore Petroleum Company on their lands.

**PETROLEUM CENTRE**—on the west side of Oil Creek, midway between Titusville and Oil City. After Pithole it became, in the words of John J. McLaurin, an oil country editor, "the metropolis of ruin and debauchery."

**PITHOLE (OR PITHOLE CITY)**—on upper Pithole Creek which empties into the Allegheny River ten miles above Oil City. The road distance from Oil

City to Pithole is about eight miles. In 1879 Rev. Alfred Brunson tells of visiting the Pithole region half a century earlier; he made many visits as an itinerant minister and chronicled his activities in his "Western Pioneer" which was published in three volumes.

PITHOLE CREEK—this rivulet rises in northeastern Venango County and traverses Allegheny and Cornplanter Townships to the river. The route roughly parallels that of Oil Creek. Pithole Creek was so named because of rock fissures near its mouth.

PLUMER—seven miles northeast of Oil City and three and one-half miles from Rouseville, along Cherry Run, midway between Oil City and the Allegheny River.

PRATHER CITY—on the Rooker farm, Pithole. Noted chiefly for the location of the Bonta House and for the successful wells drilled there. In 1866 the name was changed to Ellwood.

RENO—three miles south of Oil City on the Allegheny River.

ROUSEVILLE—at the junction of Cherry Run and Oil Creek being three miles north of Oil City.

SHAFFER FARM—ten miles north of Oil City and seven miles south of Titusville on the west bank of Oil Creek. It was the terminus for the Oil Creek Railroad.

TIDIOUTE—in Triumph Township of Warren County. Before the advent of petroleum it was a shipping point for lumber rafts and a stopping place for men traveling on the Allegheny River in either direction. Oil activity started in 1860.

TITUSVILLE—in the extreme southeastern corner of Crawford County, one-half mile north of the Venango County line. Because E. L. Drake drilled the first oil well south of town, along Oil Creek, Titusville has become known as "the birthplace of the petroleum industry." Drake's well was actually in Venango County rather than in Crawford.

WARREN—county seat of Warren County and situated in the approximate center of it. Experimental wells date from 1864 but the chief oil excitement was at nearby Cherry Grove in 1882. The town is on both sides of the Allegheny River and Conewango Creek flows into the river in the center of the city.

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Some of the men mentioned by Leonard are today remembered as pioneers in early oil production and oil business methods. A few were brilliant, a few lucky, and the balance chiefly forgotten. The following facts concerning them should be of interest:

By pages.

### PAGE 7.

I. N. Frazier (or Frazer)—As an employee of the Humboldt Oil & Refining Company at Plumer, his opportunity for oil wealth came in 1863. William Reed had drilled a dry hole along Cherry Run that year, but undismayed by his failure, he commenced another well only four rods downstream from his previous one. Reed did the drilling; Robert Criswell supplied the land; and Frazier furnished the required capital. On July 18, 1864, the new well started flowing 300 barrels a day and maintained this rate for months. Crude was bringing \$13.75 per barrel at the time.

The three partners lost little time converting their well into cash. Reed sold out for \$200,000 while Criswell received \$280,000 for his interest and the land. Frazier realized \$100,000. He at once became interested in the United States Petroleum Company and was instrumental in selecting the land for the first trial well. This initial endeavor resulted in the famous "United States" or "Frazier" well and started the mad scramble towards Pithole. Frazier was the first Superintendent of the United States Petroleum Company but served only a few months when he died very suddenly. He never saw Pithole at its peak.

### PAGE 8.

Thomas H. Brown—He gained fame because he had been employed by Frazier to locate the exact spot on which the first trial well at Pithole was drilled. Brown was a diviner and found his location by the aid of a twig of witch-hazel. The company was highly pleased with his prognostication and made him Assistant Superintendent.

It made little difference to early oil producers to know that Prof. Benjamin Silliman, Jr., famed chemist of Yale College who first examined petroleum for the Pennsylvania Rock Oil Company, had this to say of diviners on August 28, 1864, "The pretensions of diviners are worthless. The art of finding fountains and minerals by a peculiar twig is a cheat upon those who practice it, an offense to reason and common sense, an art abhorrent to the laws of nature, and deserves universal reprobation."



Even today many oil "wildcatters" still believe and use the old methods. The latest new petroleum field located by such means was discovered by Assaph Gutowsky at West Edmond, fifteen miles from Oklahoma City, during 1944. His first location was decided by the aid of his partner's "doodle-bug."

PAGE 13.

Jesse Rooker—Originally from New York State, he went west seeking a better living from farming. After bitter disappointments, he determined to settle in Venango County, Pennsylvania, near his friends, the Thomas Holmden family. Holmden sold Rooker 100 acres for \$250 of which \$100 was paid at the time of the transaction. The balance was to be paid within six years. Jesse Rooker slaved on his farm, cleared the land, built a house and raised crops. In less than three years he had paid Holmden the balance due. In a region where all money was scarce and chances to earn it virtually non-existent, this was a considerable achievement. Following the advent of oil, Rooker sold his land for \$280,000. He never had anything more to do with petroleum.

PAGE 22.

Lewis H. Smith—He arrived in Pithole in April 1865 at the age of 34 and after a varied career in several states. He had been a hardware clerk, salt producer, lumberman and real-estate dealer. The first wells in which he had interests were unsuccessful.

His first well on the Holmden farm produced some oil but ceased flowing without reason. Smith designed and helped construct a torpedo for his failing well. When finished, he carried the explosive to Pithole disguised as a roll of maps. When exploded within the shaft, it did not aid production but created plenty of excitement since it was the first torpedo used at Pithole. This young inventor was the first to use casing at Pithole and he conjured up a casing-head control valve whereby waste gas from wells was brought under control. With so many ventures in progress, he suddenly discovered he was broke so he went to Ohio, sold his real-estate and finally returned to the oil business in 1867 in the Pleasantville field. Now his luck changed for the better and he had interests in all the new fields.

He was the first President of the Titusville Oil Exchange and later was President of the important New York Petroleum Exchange.

PAGE 24.

James Sheakley, Esq.—The first and only President of "The Forty Thieves," a Pithole club composed of well-foremen, Sheakley became a member of Congress and subsequently Governor of Alaska.

PAGE 37.

David Kirk—In 1860 he entered the oil game at Franklin. When severe snow and ice hampered the movement of oil out of the Pithole territory, Kirk bought the crude, cut a road through the forest to the river, and supplied teams to get the barrels from Pithole to the waiting barges. During a critical period in the construction of the Pithole-Oleopolis Pipe Line he supplied sorely needed cash and then was made Superintendent of the line. His money was exhausted in expensive freight rate battles but in 1877 he made a come-back after organizing the McCalmont Oil Company, a successful production firm.

PAGE 38.

M. E. VanSycle (or VanSyckel)—He was the son of Samuel VanSycle, "father of the pipe line." The father was General Manager of the Miller Farm & Pithole Pipeline and the son was Superintendent. The family came from Jersey City.

PAGE 39.

Charles P. Hatch—In the first week of May 1865 he arrived in the oil country from Philadelphia by way of Corry and the Oil Creek Railroad. As the first buyers' agent for the Empire Transportation Company he established an office at Shaffer Farm, then the railroad terminus. His chief work was to see that his line secured a fair share of the oil freight. Ability to supply the necessary cars for shipments helped him a great deal.

The Titusville Pipe Company finished their line to Pithole in April, 1866. Production had declined by this time but the Empire feared Gould and Fisk transportation interests were trying to cut off their oil supply. This led Colonel Joseph D. Potts, President of the Empire, to secure control of the line. After it was accomplished, Hatch was made Superintendent and moved his office into Titusville. However, a field office was also maintained on the McKinney farm.

Hatch deserves credit as among the first to experiment with bulk tank cars for the shipment of oil. It was he who coined the word "pipeage," representing the barrel cost of carrying crude through the lines. He was the inventor of the scheme whereby oil certificates were issued for credit balances of crude, thus preventing purchasers of petroleum on the oil exchanges from being duped by enthusiastic well-owners or drillers who attempted to sell oil not yet produced.

PAGE 41.

William Reynolds—Born 1820 and died in 1911 at Meadville, Pa. After graduation from Allegheny College and Jefferson College he practiced law for a few years and gradually drifted into other interests. According to his

son, Mr. John E. Reynolds of Meadville, "In 1853 he was instrumental in forming an organization for The Meadville Railroad. This corporation afterwards became The Atlantic & Great Western Railroad of which organization he was the head until the time of his resignation in 1864."

It is believed he was interested in the Oil City & Pithole Branch Railroad as a possible feeder line to the Franklin Branch of The Atlantic & Great Western.

#### PAGE 41.

J. J. Vandergrift—Captain Jacob Jay Vandergrift was born in 1827 at Pittsburgh. After a term on river steamboats he secured the captaincy of a boat and a few years later personally owned and operated the "Red Fox." After a trip to Oil City Vandergrift saw his first bulk oil barge and hastily returned to Pittsburgh where he had a dozen of them constructed. A profitable business was founded hauling oil down the Allegheny to Pittsburgh and thus Vandergrift's first fortune was made.

As he progressed he collected interests in a line of petroleum tank cars, a pipe line and a railroad. At Oil City he founded a bank, built a refinery and organized the United Pipe Lines, a combination of many small lines. Partners assisted him in these varied enterprises.

Individually, he owned oil and gas wells and many diversified industries. The Apollo Iron & Steel Company, which he helped form, purchased considerable land on the Kiskiminetas River near Pittsburgh. The new location and town was named Vandergrift. The life of this industrial pioneer would serve as an excellent subject for a biography.

#### PAGE 42.

Culver, Penn & Co. (and Charles V. Culver)—A member of Congress, Culver was head of Culver, Penn & Co., President of the Reno Oil Company, and engaged in constructing the Reno & Pithole Railroad. This was in 1866. Apparently the firm over-expanded and then failed, bringing down with it several branch banks in the oil regions. In May Culver was arrested, tried and acquitted of charges to defraud. He worked as a surveyor in later years and repaid many of the claims against him.

#### PAGE 43.

Rev. D. S. Steadman—Pastor of Pithole's Methodist Episcopal Church. He died at Chicora, in Butler County, February 28, 1907.

#### PAGE 43.

Dr. George Loomis—He was born in Attica, New York, in 1817. After attending Genesee Wesleyan Seminary at Lima, Ohio, and Wesleyan University at Middleton, Connecticut, he taught five years at the Seminary.



Next he became Chaplain of the American Seaman's Friend Society at Canton, China, until 1852. Upon his return to this country he became President of the Wesleyan Female College at Wilmington, Delaware. From 1860-1874 he was President of Allegheny College, Meadville, Pa.

PAGE 48.

Captain S. S. Hill—When business was at its greatest at Pithole, Hill was the Postmaster. He resided at the Chase House. His assistant was A. E. Russell.

PAGE 58.

J. Wilkes Booth—This young actor invested about \$6,000 in the petroleum business. He visited Franklin three times in 1864 and left there for good on September 28, 1864. He had an interest in leases at Pithole but his Pithole land was not drilled while he was residing in the oil regions. With two or three other men he secured a small lot along the Allegheny River below Franklin. At least one trial well was drilled but never produced any oil. Contrary to the many rumors that followed Booth's assassination of Lincoln, the actor never made a penny from his oil investments.

PAGE 63.

Rev. S. J. M. Eaton—This best known minister in the oil country was born in Erie County, attended Jefferson College and Western Theological Seminary and was ordained in February 1849 under the Presbytery of Erie. For the next thirty years he was to be pastor of Franklin's Presbyterian Church.

Eaton had a fine library and liked to write history. He was an accurate and careful scholar. He wrote "History of the Presbytery of Erie," aided Egle with his "History of Pennsylvania," and was responsible for much of Caldwell's "History of Venango County." The work for which he is best known today is "Petroleum" issued in 1866.

While walking down a shady Franklin street, Dr. Eaton died of a heart attack on July 16, 1889.

PAGES 69-71.

Ben Hogan—Benedict Hagan, for that was his real name, was born in 1842 in either Germany or Switzerland. At 11 he arrived in this country with his parents. He gained fame as a boxer, was a "bounty jumper" during the Civil War, and drifted into the oil country in 1865.

For more than 14 years he ran brothels, opera houses, dance halls and concert saloons all over the petroleum territory. His fertile mind invented "The Floating Palace," a river steamer which he turned into a gambling den. By anchoring it in the middle of the river, between the boundary lines of two

counties, the authorities could not bother him. The customers reached the place by rowboats.

In 1877 or 1878, while in New York City, he was converted by Charles Sawyer, an evangelist. Hogan married, learned to read and write, and headed a gospel mission into the land of his previous crimes. Later he settled in Chicago and for years operated "Hogan's Flop," a cheap rooming house for the unfortunate. No drunks were tolerated and rowdiness was unknown. Hogan died in April 1916.

#### PAGES 69-71.

J. J. Holliday—Jack Holliday was a nephew of Ben Holliday who had charge of the western half of the stage coach routes prior to the building of the Union Pacific Railroad. Jack worked as a stage-driver for his uncle.

As an athlete his greatest fame was due to his having pushed a wheelbarrow from Rochester to Buffalo, New York, a distance of 68 miles, without a single stop. Before his fight with Hogan he was well known in Pithole as a boxer.

#### PAGE 85.

Dr. Kane—The mere mention of the name of Dr. Elisha Kent Kane, and the quotation from his book, shows how popular this Arctic explorer was throughout the nation; his life was short but interesting.

Born in 1820, he attended the University of Virginia and while there his heart was impaired from rheumatic fever. Finishing from the medical department of the University of Pennsylvania in 1842, he became a surgeon in the U. S. Navy and spent 18 months abroad. Next he went to Mexico during the Mexican War and picked up a virulent typhus plus war wounds.

In 1850 he was senior medical officer on the Grinnel Expedition to search the Arctic for the missing Sir John Franklin. Upon his return he expounded his belief in the existence of an open polar sea and became commander of the Second Grinnel Expedition. His crew suffered awful hardships, finally abandoned their ship, and reached South Greenland by traveling overland. Important scientific information was brought back by the group. Kane soon wrote his "Arctic Explorations," published in 1856, and the work was very popular in thousands of homes.

Between these expeditions, Kane met Margaret Fox, who had, with her younger sister Kate, created a national sensation as a spiritualist medium. The doctor failed to deter Margaret from this work and sailed for England. From there he went to Havanna and died suddenly; he was only 37 years old and the entire nation mourned his untimely death.

In 1866 appeared a small book called "The Love Life of Dr. Kane," purporting to be letters he had written Margaret Fox and claiming a common law marriage. It is thought Miss Fox, urgently in need of funds, published the book because of financial necessity.



In McKean County is the village of Kane, founded by the doctor's relatives. The Kane home, on Clay Street, contains many interesting relics, some having belonged to this Arctic adventurer.

PAGES 94-95.

Big Bugs from Abroad—In August and September, 1865, a group of foreign capitalists visited the oil fields. They were interested, among other things, in The Atlantic & Great Western Railroad. The English railroad builder, James McHenry, was one of the group. Representatives of the Marquis of Salamanca and the Duke of Rianzares, Spanish bankers, were present. Another of the visitors was Sir Morton Peto who wrote a book about his trip and named it, "The Resources and Prospects of America Ascertained During a Visit to the States in the Autumn of 1865." Despite the fancy title, the volume proves Peto was a careful observer of the American scene.

The town of Salamanca, New York, was so named in honor of the Marquis of Salamanca who had heavy financial investments in the railroad passing through there.

PAGE 97.

George Burchill—He was a founder and the second President of Pithole's "Swordsman's Club."

PAGE 99.

Pard B. Smith—First President of the "Swordsman's Club."

PAGE 99.

George E. Coutant—Coutant teamed with Alfred W. Smiley to build the first "accommodation" pipe line at Pithole late in 1866. The line connected directly to tanks at the largest wells and carried the crude to dump stations. Charges for this haul amounted to only 25 cents per barrel.

PAGE FOLLOWING 106, ADVERTISING.

Colonel Henry McKenty came to the oil regions after fifteen years at St. Paul, Minn. His first office was at 107 Holmden Street, Pithole, 1865. When Pithole diminished, he moved to Tidioute. His plan of selling oil lands was to give a deed in fee simple to allow the buyer to receive all the oil.

While offering free wood for fuel and lumber for building derricks, his scheme did not survive, the lease with a royalty remaining popular.



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